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Life of Jesus

Carlyle, Gavin
Light of all ages

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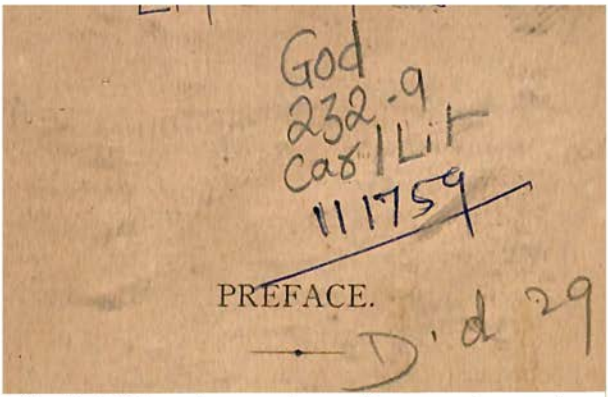
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PREFACE.

MANY volumes have been written, in recent years, on the Life of Jesus. The rationalistic school, of which Strauss and Renan are the leading representatives in Germany and France, respectively, has laboured to reconstruct histories of the founder of Christianity and his times, from which the supernatural element is eliminated. Strauss, in his first "Leben Jesu," adopted the mythical theory, as the best explanation of the narratives of miracles given in the Gospels. The writers of the Gospels, having certain ideas of the doctrinal position of Jesus, expanded traditions, which had grown up with the development of the doctrines, into the

finished stories of the miracles recorded. They were carried away by the influences around them, and themselves believed what they wrote. As the patriotic recorders of historic legends, in former days, who credited every story, however extravagant, that told in favour of their own country, they were honest but mistaken men. This theory, however, could not stand the test of critical examination. The writers of the Gospels professed to have written very soon after the time when the events occurred, and to have been themselves, in many cases, eye-witnesses of what they related. Accordingly Strauss, in his second "Leben Jesu," published a few years ago, gives up, to a large extent, this mythical explanation, and substitutes for it conscious and deliberate fraud. This latter position is the more tenable. It is quite impossible to suppose that, if there were no miracles and no resurrection of Jesus, the Gospel narratives could have been constructed,

without intended deception and gross imposition. Renan, who writes as a Frenchman, with more sentiment and less erudition, inclines to Strauss's first explanation, but gives great latitude to his supposed well-intentioned narrators, in the introduction of pious frauds. Even Jesus Himself, of whom he speaks as the best and greatest man that ever lived, he charges with maintaining claims which He knew to be false, and with descending to the most degrading expedients, as in the professed raising of Lazarus. It is painful to witness the moral obliquity of a writer who has many qualities to commend him. We feel irresistibly that he has been trained in a nation and a Church, in which the moral standard has been miserably lowered, and the sense of the sacredness of truth almost obliterated. The indirect influence of Ultramontanism with its hideous defences of religious deceptions, is painfully felt in M. Renan's book, although the author is, pro-

fessedly and really, one of the greatest enemies of the Jesuit order.

It is to be noticed, as of essential importance, that both Strauss and Renan reject the supernatural element in the Gospels as impossible—not on the ground of proved want of evidence, but on account of a preconceived philosophy. The one is a pantheist, the other a positivist. They, therefore, on *à priori* principles, reject all narratives of miracles as untruthful, and indeed absurd. They do not condescend to inquire into evidence, but take the position for granted,—dealing throughout with miracles as childish legends.

Many writers in this country have, avowedly or tacitly, accepted the conclusions of Strauss and Renan as to the unreality of the miracles recorded, without observing, or at least noting, their method of procedure. It is one thing to deny, on alleged philosophic grounds, the possibility of miracles, and to

proceed to reconstruct a history of Jesus, by rejecting all the stories of miracles as untrue. It is another to test the events narrated in the Gospels, without any foregone conclusion, by the laws of historic evidence. If the philosophies be accepted—philosophies which destroy the idea of a living God, and sweep away all moral distinctions — the works of Strauss and Renan must be regarded as able attempts to do that which must be done in the interest of historic truth. If the philosophies, with all their terrible consequences, be rejected, Christianity is not even touched by their books. It remains strong in position, as ever. Judged by the laws of historic evidence, no facts recorded in the pages of history have been more conclusively attested than the wondrous resurrection of Jesus and the numerous miracles wrought by Him and his apostles. The arguments of Chalmers on this subject, in "The Evidence and Authority of the Christian Revelation,"

have never been grappled with, and they are, we are convinced, unanswerable.

These assaults on the foundations of Christianity have drawn forth many valuable defences, and have led especially to more thorough investigation of the facts of the life of Christ. This inquiry has, there is no doubt, been of much benefit to the Christian Church. The theologians of a former age were too apt to ignore the true humanity of Christ, in contemplation of his divinity. The records of his life were much neglected. But it is through the study of the character of Jesus, as revealed in his truly human life on earth, that we are able to understand Him. His divinity shines on us through the medium of his humanity. Though the Eternal Son of God, He was as truly man as any man ever born into this world. He was without all taint of sin; but He possessed our nature in its fulness, as it was designed of God, and He will possess it for ever. By the study

especially of Christ's human life and actions we obtain lifelike conceptions of his love and tenderness, as well as of his holiness and truth.

But the mind of man is constantly prone to extremes. As there was a tendency to cold formalism, a religion of the head rather than of the heart, in the one-sided contemplation of Christ's divinity, so there is a peril of another kind in the exclusive study of his humanity. This was shown, we think, in the beautifully written volume, "Ecce Homo," which excited so much attention a few years ago. The author of that volume attempted an impossibility. We cannot form a true estimate of Christ's sayings and actions and influence on men, without clearly determining the question of his divinity. Many of his sayings, as, for instance, in addressing the rulers of the Jews, would have breathed the merest arrogance and assumption, had He not been what He said He was, the Son

of God, and had He not given evidence by his miracles of the validity of his claim. For any mere man to have given to himself such pre-eminence as Jesus did—as, for instance, when He called Himself the Light of the World—would have destroyed the dignity and elevation of his character. If He was the Son of God, though also the Son of Man, such a method of address was not only suitable to one so infinitely exalted, but was necessary. If in such case He had not professed to know God as none other did, He would have been, as He said, a liar like unto those He addressed. We cannot, then, see the beauty and perfection of even the human character of Jesus, unless we first decide the question whether He was the Son of God or not. What are only beauties and consistencies in his sayings, if the Son of God, would be blemishes, altogether destructive of the idea of human perfection, if He were only the Son of Man.

The attempt of the present little volume is to work out an idea presented to us constantly in Scripture, and of great importance to the strengthening of faith, viz. the relation of Christ to the history of all ages and nations. When we thus view Him as the centre round which the world's interests have revolved from the beginning, and will revolve to the end—as the sun, so to speak, of our system, as the enlightener of humanity in all directions, political and social as well as religious —we feel the vast import of his mission. The few years of his life on earth are not to be viewed apart from his relation to all ages. They marked the period of the great battle which was fought between the Prince of Life and the powers and principalities of evil. That battle was the turning-point in the world's history. To it the nations had looked forward, more or less clearly, from the beginning, and to it we now look backward, as the source of our Christian liberty and Christian

hopes. The position and progress of a nation for centuries have often been involved in a campaign of months, or even in the battle of a day; and so the position of the world in all ages depended on the events of those few years of the life of Christ, and especially on his death on the cross when He became an atonement for sin, and on his resurrection from the dead. Had these events not taken place, the world would never have existed as it now is. Even the heathen have indirectly derived from them many blessings they enjoy on earth, while the Christianized nations have obtained from them their great advantages and privileges.

I have attempted, after an introductory chapter dealing with the proper functions of reason as regards a professed revelation, to portray Christ in what might be termed his universal characteristics as—the Light of the World, the Life of the Redeemed, the Moral Teacher, and the Great Physician. I have

then,—to show his relation to all ages as described in Scripture,—referred to the Messianic prophecies, which, the more they are examined, the more convincing they appear. I have next considered the fact and the evidences of the resurrection, because this was the seal to the reality of Christ's mission, —as the Light of men. I have referred to the signs of his constant invisible presence with his Church, from the day of his ascension till now. I have attempted to trace out the connection of his life and words with the politics and social institutions of different periods, and also of our own day. I have regarded the future of the world, especially its great millennium, as foretold in prophecy and foreshadowed by events now in progress. And, lastly, I have looked forward to the everlasting life of the Church in heaven, as the consummation of the whole. There is thus a unity of design,—the object being to impress, from varied evidences, that Christ, as He

appeared among us, and as He now exists, is the spiritual Sun of our system, and that from Him emanates, directly or indirectly, every blessing that the world enjoys, or will continue to enjoy, till the times of restitution of all things.

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I.

REASON AND REVELATION.

(INTRODUCTORY.)

IN considering Christ as the great centre of the world's history, it is important to notice, at the outset, the provinces of reason and revelation respectively. We must guard against the attempted exclusion of reason from its proper sphere, which is the characteristic of superstition. God has given to man reason, the noblest part of his nature except conscience, and He requires him to use it within the sphere which He has assigned to it. We are bound to give an explanation of the faith that we profess. We are to inquire into the evidences of that faith,

and to be convinced in our own mind. It is an essential principle of genuine religion that faith be intelligent, and not blind.

But there are many who assert that reason is capable of judging of all truths—that it is in fact supreme in all realms of knowledge, even the most sublime and mysterious. It is noteworthy that, while reason is being thus deified in the realms of religion, it has been much limited, by more recent investigations, in the realms of philosophy. It has been proved, beyond all question, by the ablest metaphysicians of modern times, that we cannot by searching find out God. Given the existence of a personal God, we can trace his power and wisdom in the works of his hands, but we cannot, by reason alone, discover Him. The problem of existence is a mystery. We are born for our little day. We die, and return to dust. We are subject to constant change. Reason leads a very short way beyond these immediate surround-

ings of life, and leaves men, at best, in a gloomy uncertainty.

But since, it is said, we must use our reason in judging even of evidence, we cannot rise above reason. There is here, we conceive, a great fallacy. It will be generally acknowledged that, if there is a personal God, supreme over all creation, if that God choose to manifest his will by revelation, and if we can be certain that God speaks to us, it is the part of wisdom to receive what He states. It would be madness to sit in judgment, with our most limited powers, on the revelation of the Infinite and Eternal Mind,—the Creator of all spirits. If this be the voice of God, we must believe and obey it. Reason must judge of the *evidence* of the message being from God, but this is altogether different from its attempting to pronounce on the *nature* of the message. A child may be competent to judge of the evidence of a command being given by its father. It may hear his voice.

It may see him as he speaks. It may, at the same time, be utterly incompetent to form a judgment of the reasonableness of the command. And so with a professed directr evelation from God; it is one thing to judge of its evidences, it is another and quite a different thing to judge of its contents. For the former, reason is competent and necessary; for the latter, it is quite incompetent. It is only those who have a smattering of philosophy that confuse these most distinct claims of reason.

We would notice that there is nothing strange in the idea that God, if He exist as the intelligent Ruler of all things, should give direct messages to his intelligent creatures. If He has formed them with a certain power of knowing and understanding his ways, it is not unlikely, looking to the probabilities of things, but the contrary, that He should directly communicate with them, leaving them not to their own unaided

faculties. The statement that God, before the fall, held communion with man in the Garden of Eden, may possibly afford a picture of his relations with all sinless intelligences.

The question of interest is then, whether the evidences are sufficient of the Scriptures being a revelation from God. To this we would now, as preliminary to the question of Christ's relation to the world of every age, direct attention very briefly, giving only the heads of the reasons why we consider them to be so. There is the evidence of the doctrinal character and consistency of the Scriptures; the evidence of prophecy in general; the evidence of the prophecies of the coming of a Messiah; the evidence of Christ's perfect life; the evidence of his resurrection; the evidence of his continued presence with his Church; and many other evidences of a more incidental but not less conclusive character.

The Scriptures differ most widely from all other professed sacred books. These are generally dull and monotonous, mere repetitions of extravagant stories, interspersed with a few commonplace morals. Witness the ancient books of India and China, or the Talmud, or the Koran. The Scriptures, while there is a unity throughout, are endless in their variety. They are composed of books written at periods far remote from each other, and are of every variety of literary character. Some are historical, some biographical, some poetical, some legislative, some prophetical, some epistolary, some hortative. As to the writers, they lived at very different periods, and in the most varied circumstances and positions. Yet from the beginning to the close, these Scriptures teach the same doctrines, more or less unveiled, and impress the same truths.

In noting a few such doctrines and truths, we may refer to the exhibition of God as a

Being of infinite righteousness and truth, and yet of love to all those who will draw near to Him in the way He has appointed; to the representation of man as a fallen and sinful creature, created in the image of God, but lost to the light which God had given him, and to be restored only by Divine grace. The Scriptures treat everywhere of the world as lying under the power of sin, and bringing upon itself the just judgment of God, and as preserved from destruction on account of a special Divine intervention. They announce the possibility of the complete restoration of individuals by repentance and faith. They proclaim the necessity of righteousness of life in those who are to be thus fully restored. Their stories of miracles are not those extravagant legends recorded in the sacred books of the heathen, but narratives of works done with a special practical aim, and without any meretricious display. They inculcate everywhere with simplicity

and directness the duty of personal love to God and obedience to God's will. The oneness of doctrine and spirit in books written at periods so remote is a very striking testimony to their unity of origin, and, therefore, to their proceeding as a special revelation from heaven. Their great aim is to show that separation from God is the cause of all evil, and that personal heartfelt love to God is the means of all blessedness. For this the Son of God appeared as man, and made the necessary sacrifice of atonement, on the altar of his Godhead. This love to God is no mere form of expression. It is the deepest and truest emotion, as shown in the most sublime of all lyric poems—the Psalms of David, —in the words of Christ on earth, in the glowing language of the Epistles. Everywhere, from the time of the patriarchs, of Adam himself, of Enoch, of Abraham the friend of God, down to the closing words of the Apocalypse, love to God, hearty,

self-sacrificing, devoted—a true passion of the soul—is breathed with all fervour. This is the key-note, so to speak, of the books of Scripture, in which they all harmonize, and it is the more remarkable because such personal emotional love to the Deity is almost unknown in any system of mere natural religion.

There is again the evidence of prophecy, which is irresistible in its force when candidly investigated. The foretelling of future remote events, with even distant approach to accuracy, is to man an utter impossibility. If the ablest writers or politicians, for instance, of last century had attempted to picture the history of the next hundred years, how far astray would they have been in their judgments! If some one had written of our age a thousand years ago, what absurdities would he have imagined! The future, except the more immediate future, is a blank to the most far-seeing minds. We know not what will hap-

pen even on the morrow, much less at more distant periods. Yet there are in the books of Scripture prophecies most distinct, referring to events hundreds or thousands of years after they were written. We see, in fact, the plan of God's government of the world in successive ages developed in these books with marvellous clearness. We find described the changes in the great empires which have had successively rule over the civilised world—the disappearance of Babylon and of Nineveh; the transfer of empire from the east to the west, first to Greece, then to Rome; the breaking up of the Roman empire; the rise on its foundations of a corrupt form of Christianity. In the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, there are great world pictures, in which all history is treated as a shifting scene, directed by a Divine Almighty Power. Even if the Book of Daniel belonged to a later period than commonly supposed, how did it describe the Roman

power, both in its inherent nature and its decline, in language the meaning of which it is impossible to mistake? All critics acknowledge that it was written long before that empire had attained its greatness, and many ages before it had begun to fall. And, again, in the New Testament, especially in the Revelation, there are the most distinct pictures of the events which have taken place in the Church of Christ, which, though there may be difficulties as to details, cannot in their general aspects be misunderstood. Whence could such pictures, in the Old and New Testaments, have come but from that Being to whom the inhabitants of the earth are as grasshoppers, who weighs the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance, and to whom all things, present, past, and future, are clearly manifest? Here is a testimony to God having given a revelation of his will which, on every ground of fair reason, cannot be resisted.

It is again no fancy, but a manifest and easily established fact, that there is foretold in all the Old Testament Scriptures the coming of One who was to inaugurate a new state of things; who was to put men to the test; who was to conquer the powers of darkness; and whose kingdom was to be different from other kingdoms, and yet more powerful. That person stands out in these ancient writings so conspicuously as the central figure in the history of the world, that the Jews, before He came, all expected his appearance. He is foretold immediately after the fall. He is announced to Abraham. He is spoken of by Jacob on his dying bed. He is prophesied of by Moses in the remarkable Book of Deuteronomy, which brings out the spirit of the Jewish economy and its relation to the future. He is foreseen, in the midst of his deep affliction, by Job. His praise is celebrated, his character depicted and sufferings de-

scribed in the Psalms. It is impossible to understand many of these Psalms except as speaking of Him. He is shadowed forth even in the Proverbs of Solomon. He is described most minutely and distinctly in the second division of the prophecy of Isaiah. The period of his coming and the nature of his power, as a stone cut out of the mountain without hands, breaking in pieces the other kingdoms, is accurately told in Daniel. The last words of the Old Testament are an announcement of the preparation for his advent.

This same Being, thus foretold in all parts of the Old Testament, is the centre around which revolves the teaching of the New Testament. His history is the subject of engrossing interest. His doctrines are everywhere unfolded, both in his own words and those of his followers. His influence in the world's future history, and his coming again in glory, occupy its closing book.

Surely in this agreement of so many different writers as to the coming of the Messiah, and as to his character and sufferings and victory, we have another strong testimony to the Scriptures being a genuine revelation by the Infinite God of his will and purposes.

There are various other evidences of the Divine origin of the Scriptures which we can only mention. There is the testimony of miracles, not wrought in a corner, but in the full light of day, and proclaimed soon after among many thousands of those who could have exposed the imposture, had they not taken place. There is the evidence, above all, of that great miracle of the Resurrection, which was constantly attested in the very city where it was alleged to have happened, and which could have been disproved easily, had it been a falsehood, by the Jewish rulers, to whom it was of the most vital interest to disprove it. There is the evidence of the high and pure morality

characterizing the Scriptures everywhere, but especially the Sermon on the Mount, the teaching of which transcends infinitely in its beauty all human ideas of moral life ever devised, though there may be vague glimpses of similar teaching, here and there, in pagan philosophy. There is the stern, unflinching love of truth manifested in all these writings, which makes it impossible for us to suppose that the writers could have knowingly set forth fables as Divine truths. And there is the undoubted testimony of history that, in defence of the truth of miracles of which they professed to have been witnesses, many gave up their lives, after having endured almost every conceivable species of suffering and hardship.

There is surely enough then to prove that God has revealed his will to men in a series of writings, These writings, together called the Scriptures, in their unity of teaching, as regards God, and as regards man and his

position in the world, in their undoubted prophecies of events, even far distant, in their description, before his coming, of the Messiah and his character and work, in their wonderful representations of Him after He had appeared, in their attested miracles, in their lofty and consistent doctrines, in their spiritual life, in their pictures, so pure and lofty, of the heavenly glory, and in many other ways, clearly proclaim even to reason, that they have the authority of God. But if God has so revealed Himself, if He has given to us distinct and direct messages as to things which it is necessary for our welfare that we should know, but which we could not have found out of ourselves; if He, the all-wise and all-knowing, has really spoken to us, we must surely accept the revelation. He has taught us much that is above reason, nothing that is opposed to it. He has revealed to us mysteries regarding even ourselves and regarding Himself and his relation

to us, which we could by no possibility have discovered by reason. The problems with which revelation deals, from the beginning to the close, are such as the wisest men tried to explore in vain, or with the smallest success. These problems are solved. And though we could not have discovered the solution for ourselves, do we not, when it is discovered to us, hear the very voice of the Father and Creator of our spirits, speaking to our inmost souls? A person might be wandering in darkness and perplexity, and might be perfectly incapable of discovering the causes of his misery, but he might recognise as correct the explanation of some wise observer, and might, in following his directions, escape from his bewilderment. And thus, though we could never have discovered the great facts affecting our destiny for ourselves, we may recognise the voice of our Creator, when He makes them known to us. Let reason have its part,

in intelligently regarding those mysteries in the relations in which they are brought to light; let us not profess to believe in contradictions;—this is superstitious and absurd; let us seek to be satisfied as to the evidence of that which we do believe; let ours not be a blind and ignorant faith such as Christ utterly condemned—a bowing to the pretended authority of inflated and fallible men; let us prove all things;—but let us not imagine that reason can ever ascend to the heights of the mysteries of God. If there were no mysteries to us, we should have the omniscience of God Himself. Where He has revealed his will to us, as He has done most clearly, let us accept the revelation with gladness, and, at the same time, use our reason vigorously within that sphere for which its functions are fitted and designed.

II.

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

THERE are many analogies in the spiritual and the material worlds or universes. One of the most striking of these is presented in the expression, "Christ, the Light of the World." As the sun is the centre and source of material light in the solar system, Christ is the centre and source of all spiritual light in earth and heaven. If Christ had been mere man, it would have been impossible for Him to have held such a position among his fellows as to be in any sense termed "the Light of the World." When, however, He is God as well as man, when God has appeared as man in two natures and one person, it is not

wonderful, but most natural, that He should be the spiritual sun that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

The statement that Christ is the Light of the World harmonizes with the entire Scriptural representation of man's history and position. As soon as man fell, the promise of a Deliverer was given, and on this promise was made to depend the continuance of man on the earth, in a state of probation or trial. It is clearly indicated in the Scriptural account of the earliest period that there was, from the beginning, a seed of righteousness. There were those who knew God and who sought to walk in his ways, and there were those who obeyed the lusts of the corrupt heart. We read, for instance, of Enoch, who walked with God so closely that he was translated from earth to heaven. At this primeval period there was also the institution of sacrifice, which clearly foreshadowed the atonement to be offered for sin. The sons of God

became corrupt by mingling with the wicked, when at length almost the whole human family was swept away. Sacrifices were continued by Noah and his descendants, and the pure worship of God was maintained until men began again to fall away, by reason of their unholy lives. All through these early ages, as is evident, not only from sacred, but also from profane, history with its traditions, there were true worshippers of God, while the varied forms of religion, in different countries, contained many of the remnants of primitive revelation. In the history of Egypt, the most civilised of countries in the early historic period, we find clear indications of an ancient spiritual worship. In the polytheism of Greece and Rome, in later ages, there are traceable many of the germs of a purer religion. Some of the best and ablest thinkers, as Socrates and Plato, approached a true conception of God as a holy and righteous being. In the many systems of heathenism we can

see departures from a primitive standard of truth, just as in a decayed Christianity we can historically trace a falling away from the pure doctrines of the Gospel. This early revelation was further preserved, even in the heathen world, by the separation of the Jews, and by God's continued manifestations to them. The establishment in the heart of the nations, for Judæa was in the centre of the civilised world, of the pure worship of the one God, must have had a leavening influence on all. The knowledge of God, as a righteous and holy God, must have radiated far and wide from Jerusalem, especially after the reigns of David and of Solomon. In the earlier ages, before the setting apart of one nation, we see Melchizedek, a Canaanitish king, possessed of the clearest knowledge of God, and worshipping Him with all purity. There may have been many others of kindred spirit among the different nations, before, and even after, the settlement of the Jews in Canaan. Had God,

however, not chosen a people specially to serve Him and to war against idolatry, the darkness would everywhere have been much greater. The separation of this people was distinctly associated from the beginning with the coming of the Messias, and many of the rites and ceremonies instituted by God through Moses were, in their nature, fitted to foreshadow the work of Christ, and to preserve, by this means, in the minds of the pious Jews, a true knowledge of the character of God, as just and yet most merciful.

It may be said with certainty that, but for the early revelations of God and their traditional influence, and but for his continued manifestation of power in the midst of one people, the world would have sunk into a much lower moral condition than it did. We acknowledge freely the vast intellectual influence of the Greeks, with their noble literature, unrivalled in any age or among any people, and also the high moral tendency of

some of their great writings; but the glimpses of Divine truth, which they had, they derived, to a large extent, from those primitive traditions that had interwoven themselves with national rites and customs.

But this revelation of God, which saved the world from moral ruin, was from the beginning associated with the promised Deliverer. The institution of sacrifices, which descended to almost all nations, pointed to Him. The forbearance of God with the unthankful and evil, in providing for their wants, spoke of the mercy offered to men, on account of the coming of the Messias. The Son of God, from the beginning, also manifested Himself personally to certain men. He appeared to our first parents in the garden of Eden, and gave to them the promises, and revealed to them the true method of worship. He showed Himself at different times to Abraham, as before the destruction of Sodom; also to Hagar, and to Isaac, and to Jacob. He was

seen by Moses in the burning bush, and He gave to him the law on Mount Sinai. He appeared to Joshua as the Captain of the Lord's Host. He showed his power unto Gideon, Jephthah, Samson, and others of the judges. He spoke to the prophets, as when He told the child Samuel of the downfall of the house of Eli. He appointed kings. He filled David with the rapture of his presence, and inspired those psalms which give musical utterance to the deepest emotions of the renewed heart in all ages of the Church's history. He revealed Himself to Solomon in a dream. He shadowed forth his sufferings and his victory, and the glory of his everlasting kingdom, in the sublime visions of Isaiah. He appeared in outward form to Daniel, in almost the same aspect as afterwards to the Apostle John. He stood by Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace. His presence was thus constantly felt in his Church. Through Him the Father directed that Church, and preserved

a faithful seed among men. The Father has in all ages manifested Himself only through the Son, as declared in many sayings of Christ Himself, and in various other passages of the New Testament. To the Lord's servants the period before his first appearing was full of hope. "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and He saw it and was glad." The Psalms celebrated his praises and the glory of his kingdom in words which filled the soul of David with joy unspeakable. What could be more rapturous or sublime than the words of the last psalm that he wrote? "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth. In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in Him:

all nations shall call Him blessed. Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen." It was suitable that the royal Psalmist should close his glorious inspired message to the Church and to the world with a picture so vivid and sublime of the nature and continuance of the kingdom of Him who was to be his Son and yet his Lord. Onwards, afterwards, as the ages rolled to the time of our Lord's birth, the hopes of God's servants were sustained by the promises of his manifestation in the flesh. Not only the Jews, but even many of the heathen, were in expectation of the coming of some wonderful person, who should preserve the world from that moral ruin to which it was hastening, when suddenly the light dawned in the manger of Bethlehem.

The appearance of Christ in the flesh was

thus no isolated event, unexpected and unprepared for. The promises in regard to Him had for many ages gladdened the souls of faithful ones, and given them bright anticipations of the future. He had Himself appeared to sages of old, and all the rites of revealed religion pointed to the work He had to do. He came, not as other men, but as the Son of God, conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and born of her, yet without sin. He assumed the nature of man, really and truly as any man ever born; but with this there was intimately associated the nature of God. He fulfilled, indeed, all the conditions of manhood, being subject as a child to his parents, and remaining during his youth and early manhood in seclusion. But his birth was heralded by angels, who proclaimed the large intention of his mission to the earth, in their song, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men." And

when He entered on his public ministry, the Holy Ghost descended on Him, in visible form, and the Father bore witness to Him: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." He went forth, after his baptism, into the wilderness that He might there encounter and overcome that prince of the power of the air who had been accustomed, by wily counsels and wicked craft, to rule, to a large extent, the affairs of men. He wrought miracles, with no great pomp of circumstance or display, for He desired not the honour of the world,—but of a nature that gave clearest evidence of the possession of Divine power. With a word He cured all manner of diseases, opened the eyes of the blind, made the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak, the helpless cripple to leap for joy, and the poor paralytic to regain youth-like health and vigour. He recalled even the dead from their deep sleep and restored the soul to its union with the body, and made the stagnant

blood to flow again with vital force from the heart through the veins. These were not works to be done in his own name by any being except Him who created man, who understood the issues of life, and who could re-create that which He Himself had formed. Even in his deepest humiliation, the endurance of the reproach and agony of the cross, He gave the strongest evidence of his Divine majesty. We see clearly from the narrative of the events immediately preceding his death that He Himself prepared for it, going up deliberately to Jerusalem to that Passover at which He was to be offered, and surrendering Himself into the hands of his betrayer and his murderers in the garden of Gethsemane. He prepared Himself for this death, because it was necessary that He should offer a real atonement for sin, by bearing that curse and penalty which otherwise must have fallen on the head of the guilty. Can anything more clearly attest his

Divine nature than his fitness to make such an atonement? It was especially from the cross, where He passed through the depths of humiliation, that there issued forth those rays of light, the genial influence of which has been felt, more or less directly, by all men in the world, both in the ages which preceded his coming and in those ages which have followed. He was declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead. He ascended to heaven in the presence of a multitude; and He gave evidence of his having passed into glory when, according to his promise, He poured out the Holy Ghost upon thousands, on the Day of Pentecost, and originated the life of that Christian Church which He has ever since preserved.

The mission of Christ was altogether unique and special, giving evidence of his true divinity as well as of his real humanity. There is no extravagance, therefore, in the idea of his being the Light of the World. For

any mere man of even the highest genius to make such a claim would be enough to convict him of the most mad folly and vain presumption. How could one man, among the countless millions of all generations, rise so infinitely above all others as to be *the* Light of the World? The suggestion, if made, could not even be entertained. It would be condemned in the very statement. The case is altogether changed when Christ is regarded as Divine. If God has indeed been manifest in the flesh, He not only may, but must, be the Sun of our humanity, giving light, wherever his influence is felt. It is then no madness or folly, but the most necessary and natural conclusion, to say that *He* is the Light of the World. If the great and infinite Jehovah, He who is one with the Father and with the Spirit, has appeared in the ranks of the children of men, He must so transcend all others in wisdom, power, truth, majesty, as to stand out conspicuous, as the

sun in the heavens, as the light-giver of men.

Thus has it been with Christ. History has ratified his highest claim, and has in doing so given indirect evidence of his true Godhead. When Simeon declared prophetically of the infant which he held in his arms, that He was to be "a Light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel;" when, many years afterwards, Jesus Himself made the startling statement to the Pharisees and the people, "I am the Light of the World: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life;" and again when, at a much later period, the Apostle John was moved to write, "That was the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world;"—there seemed no human possibility of the ratification of a claim so extraordinary. Jesus lived in the then obscure Roman province of Judæa. He was despised by the dignitaries of a despised people, by

whom he was soon after led to an ignominious death. He forbade absolutely the use of arms for the furtherance of his cause, or even of the carnal weapons of worldly policy, saying emphatically, "My kingdom is not of this world." Mahomet, whose success as a founder of a new religion has sometimes been compared to that of Christ, not only used the sword, but used it as a chief weapon—yea, commanded savagely to exterminate those who would not accept his creed. But Jesus forbade the use of all such weapons. When He made this claim—the highest that could be made in human language—to be the Light of the World, He was, in the eyes of men, an obscure prophet in an obscure country, acting in opposition to those rules of worldly policy which might be expected to bring success to Himself and his religion. Yet how has this claim been ratified? As the ages have rolled on, how has the name of Christ, the crucified one, risen above every other in the

history of the world! how has this name, regarded from the historic point of view, caused the names of the world's greatest philosophers, poets, warriors, statesmen, to become utterly dim in comparison! The name of Christ has lost nothing of its power with the advance of time. In a few centuries it conquered outwardly the mighty Roman empire, then world-wide in its influence. It next penetrated to the wandering tribes of the north, the conquerors afterwards of Rome. More than a thousand years later it convulsed society, as it aroused men to shake off the oppressive yoke under which the Christian Church had been brought. It roused anew the human intellect from its slumber, and sent it forth in that research into the works of God which has produced and is still producing such marvellous results. And in the present century it has stirred up the Church again, as in apostolic times, to send forth the Gospel into all parts of the world, even to the

remotest islands of the sea. Those nations who are, so to speak, the brain of the world, who control its destinies, all profess to honour the name of Christ, and those races that have been most true to this profession, have spread abroad most widely over the surface of the globe, and have risen to the height of a world-wide influence. Some suppose that Christ's name will soon be forgotten; but, though unbelief was never more bold in its assertions than now, the name of Christ has never been more honoured and adored.

Thus has history verified the marvellous statement in the Gospel of John: "That was the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." It has thus proved indirectly the reality of Christ's Godhead, for no mere man who made such a claim as this could possibly have foreseen its ratification. It could have been only by Divine knowledge that, though despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrow and ac-

quainted with grief, Christ clearly understood his own position to the past and the future, as the Light of the World.

But in what respect does He light every man that cometh into the world? Christianity has its direct and its indirect light. Where, directly, it shines into the souls of men, it turns them from the power of Satan and the rule of the carnal heart to God. This is Christ's life in the soul, made life to those who partake of it by the indwelling power of the Holy Ghost. But there is an indirect or reflected light which brings many outward blessings to all men. The position of the world, from the fall to the final judgment, depends upon Christ and his work. But for Him the world would not be left as it is, in a state of sin, without utter condemnation. It is because of Christ and his work that such mercy is shown, in the midst of wickedness and ingratitude. The blessings of every-day life, the clothing of nature with

beauty, the enjoyment of friendships and of family affections, we owe to the forbearance of God, who withholds his judgments while men live in sin, because of the atonement and intercession of Christ. Judgment is meanwhile restrained. The light of Christ thus shines indirectly in those outward enjoyments, the continuance of which it secures. It shines indirectly also in those moral influences which it brings to bear on men, especially in countries where Christianity is well understood. It is to the teaching of Christ that we owe the ideas now prevalent, of the dignity and the value of every human soul, and most of the privileges which we enjoy in the liberty and security of our political systems. The leaven of the principles which Christ taught is affecting, more and more, the body politic, even after eighteen hundred years. It was the Christian conscience that, in recent times, broke the chains of the slave, and said to the oppressed, "Go

free." And it is Christian love that has originated those numerous institutions for the sick and destitute and orphans that distinguish Christian from heathen countries, and that flourish most in enlightened Christian communities. Every man born into the world is thus benefited by the light of Christ through that general dispensation of mercy by which the world is spared from immediate judgment, while there are very special benefits reaped by those who live in countries where there is genuine Christian life. There is not a revival of true religion in any circle which does not bring many advantages to the surrounding society. There is not one truly God-fearing man who does not cause many blessings to descend on his family and relations, and on the neighbourhood in which he lives. A few high-minded, earnest, godly men will elevate the tone even of a large community.

But, though the light of Christ lighteth

in a manner every man that cometh into the world, and though it lights more clearly those living in a Christian community, and though it lights most brightly those who have the privileges of a Christian home, this light will avail nothing in the end unless it shines directly into the soul. The indirect light of worldly advantages and social privileges and higher moral feeling will disappear, and leave a man in utter darkness, unless the Sun of Righteousness shine on him with healing in his wings. The higher the privileges the sadder the fall, and the more intense the suffering, when the blessings of Christ will be taken away. The misery of those who have enjoyed many advantages, and have neglected them, it is impossible to imagine. The light of Christ shines now for all who will receive it, but that light will soon disappear from the horizon, unless it be not only around us but within us, penetrating, with its genial and warming in-

fluences, the deepest emotions of the heart. If, however, Christ thus give us light, He will gladden us for ever in that city which has no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine on it; for the glory of God lightens it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

III.

THE LIFE OF THE REDEEMED.

WE have considered Christ as the Light of the World. He is the Sun of our system, from whom comes, directly or indirectly, every ray of light that illumines men. The more we reflect on what is implied in this description, the more are we struck with the vastness of its meaning. We could not imagine for a moment that any mere fellow-man could occupy so pre-eminent a position above all others as to be designated the Light of the World. But if Christ was God manifest in the flesh, the difficulty at once vanishes. It is then not only possible to suppose that He *may* have been

the Light of the World, but it is necessary to regard Him as such. We noticed how He lighteth every man that is born into the world. The present position of the world, from the fall to the last judgment, is dependent on Christ and his work. The mercies, dispensed so liberally to even the unthankful and evil, are bestowed, because Christ withholds the judgments which are ready to fall on the heads of the ungodly. This claim of our Lord to be the Light of the World, made at a time when, to all human appearances, He was so feeble, and when He was about to be put to death ignominiously, has been ratified by the events of history. His name has risen far above every other name, and it has not become obscured by the advance of time, but has, again and again, up to the present day, roused nations from the slumber of death and kindled among men the loftiest enthusiasm. The name of Christ is now as powerful as ever, yea, more powerful than

ever. There is no nation or kingdom in which it has not been heard of in recent times. The principles inculcated by Christ sway to a large extent the councils and institutions of those nations which direct the destinies, and may be regarded as the brain, of the world. The benefit of those principles is indirectly felt by multitudes, especially in so-called Christian countries, into whose hearts the light of Christ has never shone.

We would now regard Christ as the Life. In Him, says the Scriptures in the Gospel of John, "was life, and the life was the light of men." He thus spoke of Himself: "The bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world."

Life is the most strange and inexplicable of all things. We see it in its effect, but we cannot understand it in itself. How strange, when we reflect on it, does it appear that the earth, which had been barren in the winter, should become green and fruitful with the returning

spring and summer! By some unknown process life permeates the trees and flowers, clothing them with leaves and adorning them with colours of all shades and varieties. All nature seems to sing for joy, as reviving life is felt on every side, nurtured by the genial heat of the sun. Or when we consider the presence of life in those creatures to whom God has given an independent existence, how wonderful does it appear! How mysterious is that exuberant life which fills the air, the earth, the sea, with creatures most strange, and many of them most beautiful! What is that life which makes the eagle to soar in his mysterious flight, to rejoice in his strength as he sails along from rock to rock and crag to crag, as he sweeps majestically above mountains and valleys, and looks down from afar upon his prey? What is that life which rouses the lion to go forth from his den in the darkness of night, making all creatures tremble as his voice is heard; or that gives

fury to the war-horse in the battle; or that causes the Arab's steed to pass, with the speed of the tempest, through the regions of the desert; or that rouses the birds to warble their cheerful notes at the early dawn; or that fills the ocean with fish of every species and with all manner of curious creatures which glide continually through its waters?

In all the works of God we see the effects of life, but we know nothing of the life itself which produces such effects. How extraordinary, were we not so accustomed to regard it without thought, would seem the contrast between life and death! In a moment—it may be by a single shot striking some vital part—that secret principle which gave power and action is gone, and the creature which, just before, was full of vital energy, lies helpless and motionless at our feet. We may explain the phenomena attending life and death; we may trace the relations and similarities in the different orders of creatures;

but no one has ever yet attained, or probably ever will attain, to the understanding of what life is in itself.

And so also as regards spiritual life. We can see its marvellous effects, but we cannot explain or fathom it. It is a secret energy that proceeds from Christ which we feel if we possess it, but which we cannot understand. What a striking change was produced on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost, sent forth by the Father in Christ's name, descended with power on the assembled disciples! How clearly did they at once see and understand spiritual things! With what zeal and boldness were they inspired! Peter, who, a few weeks before, had denied his Lord with oaths and cursing, in the presence of a feeble maid, now feared not to face the fury of the Jewish Sanhedrim, and to declare before that august body, "We ought to obey God rather than men." Men who had been cold and selfish and worldly, were filled at once

with such love one to another that they sold their possessions and goods, and shared the proceeds with others, as every man had need. They endured, even with joy, trials and persecutions and deaths from which the spirit would naturally have shrunk. The whole aspect of things was changed, and they seemed to live in another world, with feelings and aspirations different from those of other men. Such was the power of this spiritual life. It raised the soul from the depths of sin. It swept away contracted feelings of the carnal heart which is engrossed with self and selfish interests. It made all things new, enabling men to rejoice in the love of God of which they had previously had no knowledge. It filled them with bright anticipations of the glory of the kingdom of Christ. It elevated them far above the passing events of time. Such was at first, and is still, the effect of that life which comes from Christ into the hearts of his servants. This life we see clearly in its

effects; we feel it also in its inward power, but we understand it not in its hidden nature. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

But though we understand not this spiritual life in itself, as we understand not physical life, but see it only in its effects, we know the source from whence it proceeds. It comes from Christ, who is the bread of life that came down from heaven. Though it is imparted by the Holy Ghost, it is the life of Christ—that which He purchased for us by his sufferings and death. He lives at the right hand of power, and bestows those gifts which He obtained by becoming man, and perfecting our human nature, through his sufferings and death. He is the Head, and we are the members.

The Holy Ghost takes of the perfected human life of Christ, and imparts it to his

servants. He enables them to use those powers by which Christ resisted the influence of the Tempter. He gives them that faith in God possessed by Him who never wavered for a moment in his trust and confidence, even in the most bitter agonies of the cross. He gives to them that far-seeing wisdom which enables them to look upon life and all its concerns—its riches and honours and glories—as but trivial compared with the glories which the Lord has promised for his own. He gives to them that meekness and gentleness and forbearance which appeared so beautifully in Him, and which contrasted so strikingly with the strife and pride and arrogance of carnal men. He breathes into them that spirit of self-sacrifice which enables them to look on passing interests as trivial, when compared with the larger interests of Christ's kingdom. He works within them the very characteristics of Christ, so that they become transformed into his image. Thus the life which

we have, if spiritually quickened, is the life of Christ. We live in Him; we feed on Him; we obtain his grace; we are strengthened by his strength. As we inherit from our fathers an evil and degraded nature, so we obtain from the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, the properties of that new nature, the force of that new life, which fits for the converse of angels, for full enjoyment of God, and for an abundant entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

This life of Christ, imparted by the Spirit to those who put their trust in Him, is the spring of all even the indirect blessings which flow from the influence of religion. It has been possessed by God's servants in every age, both before and since the appearing of Christ in the flesh. It is specially characterized by faith, which implies a devout trust in and dependence on God, as revealed. It showed itself in Enoch when it led him to maintain the righteousness and strict justice

of God's rule, in the midst of iniquity. It revealed itself in Noah when it induced him perseveringly to build the ark, amidst the jeers and taunts of that wicked race which was about to be destroyed. It appeared in Abraham, the friend of God, when by faith he resisted the spread of idolatry, maintained the pure worship of Jehovah, left his kindred to wander forth to a strange land, believed in the promise of a son in his old age, and proceeded to sacrifice that son when required to do so by Divine command. Its influence was seen in Moses when he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, despising the splendour of Egyptian royalty, and choosing rather to share the contempt and the affliction of a nation of slaves. Its power was shown in numbers of the Lord's servants in those ancient times, who "through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the

edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens." This life of Christ exhibited its great power in the Church of the Apostolic age, when so many sacrificed their earthly all, and when it was a common observation of the heathen, "See how these Christians love one another." It has continued to exercise its influence in every period since, and it will do so till the number of the elect be complete.

Those who have possessed this life have been the salt of the earth. They have been the means of Christ's communication with the world. They have set up a standard of truth and holiness and of brotherly kindness and charity which has caused the general community of men to resist and repress many flagrant evils. The influence of even a few men, inspired with this life which comes from Christ, on an age and a nation has frequently been shown to be immense. Witness the mis-

sionaries of the different ages of the Church —Columba, for instance, who, from his island centre of Iona, proclaimed the Gospel far and wide in Scotland, and left an impression which had not disappeared to the time of the Reformation; St. Patrick, who accomplished a similar work for Ireland; Wycliffe, who gave a rude shock to the Papacy when in the zenith of its power, and who prepared the way for the Reformation in England; Huss, who became the apostle of Bohemia, and the faithful martyr in a dark age; the Waldenses, who travelled through many parts of Europe, bearing with them the glad tidings of salvation at the imminent peril of their lives; Luther, Calvin, Knox, Latimer, and others who overthrew the most gigantic evils, and did a work which has affected the destinies of the most powerful nations to our own day.

By the instrumentality of such men, who have partaken of that life which Christ imparts, who have fearlessly exposed sin, who

have encountered all opposition and peril and suffering in the cause of truth, the most important events in the history of the world have been directed, the public affairs of men have been so guided, as to preserve society from ruin. They may not have been politicians themselves, though many of them were such, but they have marked out the great courses of political history. Their power has not proceeded from mere natural genius. They may have been great intellectually, but many of the greatest intellects that the world has produced have been devoted to purposes of evil and not of good—to schemes of strife and hatred and vengeance, by which they have done unspeakable injury to their fellow-men. Nothing is more mistaken than a blind hero-worship which inculcates respect for mere power apart from the method of its exercise. Even poets and painters, not to speak of statesmen and warriors, have often turned the gifts of genius to the worst account.

That which gave to the men of whom we speak their power for good was the life of Christ in them, showing itself most clearly in their faith. In faith—trust in God and reverent obedience to his will—they were all pre-eminent, though they differed much in other things. Possessed of this faith, they went forth with strength to the battle against principles of evil and their practical development in the world. They fought and conquered, because they loved God with all their heart, and sought to walk uprightly and to walk surely, and this love and aim they derived from Christ, being partakers of his life.

Christ is the light of the world, but He is the life only of his true servants. How great responsibility is laid on them, to manifest this life among men! How earnestly should they seek to promote it in their own souls! This life exists in all of them, but it must be tended and fostered. By devout and earnest

prayer and by holy living must it be promoted. It acquires continually more power in the soul of him who walks near to God; and the more vigorous that it is in Christ's disciple, the greater his influence for good in the Church and in the world. We see its progress strikingly described in that passage of the prophet Isaiah which is so familiar to all: "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." The eagle has no difficulty in his sublime flights, because he has life and energy to accomplish them. To chain him down to earth is wretched bondage. The powerful steed rejoices in his strength as he passes swiftly along from place to place, and he feels not weary

with the race. The buoyant traveller who explores beautiful regions is not soon fatigued with the march. Exuberant life gives energy to all to accomplish, easily and pleasantly, that for which they are fitted. And so it is that the life which comes from Christ the Head gives energy to all his members, and makes it their delight to do their Father's will. And this life of Christ, freely developed in them, refreshes and invigorates the world.

IV.

THE MORAL TEACHER.

CHRIST spoke as no other man ever spoke. The method of his teaching was different from that of others. Even the greatest of teachers, as Socrates, have been but explorers in the field of knowledge, speaking often with uncertainty, bringing up treasures here and there, as men who dive for pearls. Christ always spoke with absolute certainty even of the profoundest truths. He spoke as one possessed of unlimited knowledge, who adapted Himself to the feebleness of the human intellect, imparting as much as it was prepared to receive. He explained clearly mysteries which the greatest human

teachers had never attempted to explore. He spoke of the remote past and the distant future, with more certainty than other men of the present. He described the love of the Father and the method of God's government, in a manner that no one could have done who was not a partaker of infinite knowledge and wisdom.

As the spiritual and moral teacher, Christ showed that all true morality must be of the heart, and that its central principle is love. The speculations of moral science, which have occupied so much thought, are, for the most part, rendered valueless by the touch of the hand of Christ, and in such a method as to convince at once of the infinitely greater depth of his knowledge. It is most false, with the teaching of Christ in the Gospels, and especially in the Sermon on the Mount, to represent, as many do, that practical or applied Christianity and moral science have spheres entirely different. Christ searched to

the deepest motives of human action. He taught the principles of the only genuine morality, as they had never been taught or understood. And if we receive his explanations, the speculations of many of the schools become idle words. A certain outward morality may be based on broad, selfish calculations, or on the desire of the approval of others, or on the pleasurable emotions consequent on the exercise of the benevolent affections, or on a cold sense of duty; but Christ showed that no morality is genuine or permanent which does not proceed from the deepest feelings of the heart. Make the tree good, and the fruit will be also good. The far-sighted regard to our own interests is prudence—a most important virtue. The desire of the approval of others—which, within certain limits, is commendable, beyond these, most dangerous—is ambition and love of applause. The pleasurable nature of the exercise of the benevolent affections,

while given by God as an encouragement to such exercise, may lead only to self-conceit and pride. The sense of duty is the measure and not the fountain of moral worth, for the very idea of duty to God and to man is based upon obligations impressed by the feelings of the heart. This idea of duty is different in different men. To the merely selfish man, duty is simply to look well after his own interests. Christ pointed out, with a clearness which makes his statement absolutely convincing, so soon as understood, that no moral action is worth which does not influence the whole soul, which is not based on the genuine feelings of the heart, and which does not flow from disinterested love to God and to men. In the Sermon on the Mount, He laid bare the inmost recesses of the heart of man, and taught most emphatically that all moral worth must be found there. He showed clearly that it is not the mere outer act but the secret motive that defiles. "Ye

have heard that it hath been said that whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: but I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause is in danger of the judgment. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." And speaking of acts of devotion to God, He searched in the same manner to the deepest motives of the heart. "When thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. . . . Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth. . . . And thy Father which seeth in secret

Himself shall reward thee openly." "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. . . . Use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking." "When thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret." These precepts of Christ's make the essence of morality to consist in the inmost thoughts and feelings of the soul.

We may easily perceive how this teaching of Christ lays bare the true nature and aspects of sin. Our outward acts are influenced by inward thoughts and feelings; and if we are restrained from doing injury to our neighbours by the dread of consequences, though such restraint is necessary for the protection of society, we are none the better. If we so

hate another that we should regard his death with pleasure, if we covet our neighbours' property, if we indulge in lascivious thoughts, if envy, jealousy, unjust anger, and hatred sweep like storms across the soul, then we are guilty before God as of the deeds to which they naturally lead. And, in reality, if we were not restrained by the fear of loss of character, or even the dread of just punishment, from giving effect to our evil passions, we should do those very acts which we perhaps imagine we loathe and despise. How often do men of so-called respectability and of good standing in society do deeds that are equivalent to robbery and even murder, when they can evade the consequences,—as by dishonesty or great sharpness in commercial transactions, the traducing of the character of those who thwart their interests or expose their inconsistencies, or the playing fast and loose with the reputation of others! It requires no very deep insight or enlarged experience to see

that much of the morality which guards even from crime is only on the surface, and that in the hearts of multitudes of the outwardly respectable there are at work the most evil influences.

Christ thus pointed out the foundation of moral disease by showing that all true virtue must be centred in the heart, and that all vice and crime have their root there. "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." He dealt with no mere surface offences, but with the hidden feelings of the heart. In this He showed that Divine penetrating insight which pierces through the outer coatings of virtue, and looks to the issues of life, in the thoughts and emotions.

But such searching morality would have been of no benefit to men, if Christ had not shown the cause of man's moral disease, and provided for it a remedy. He taught clearly, what had been revealed from the beginning,

that man is hopelessly and helplessly under the influence of moral corruption, that he is born in sin, and that this disease of sin must be eradicated if there is to be true moral life. He showed that the cause of this moral disease was the separation of the soul from God, on account of the guilt of sin, and that the guilt must be removed, and the power of sin destroyed, before it is possible to do what is morally right. He showed further that the basis of all true morality is love to God and love to man—principles or affections opposed to the instincts of the diseased heart, since man does not know God except as a Being of power, and since he naturally seeks his own selfish interests at the expense of the interests of others. This law of love Christ showed as clearly to be the controlling principle of moral order, as astronomers have shown the law of gravitation to be a ruling principle of the material universe.

The mere teaching of such doctrine to a

diseased world would have been of no more avail than the inculcation of the rules of health,—as regular bodily exercise and proper diet,—to a bedridden patient who had no appetite and poor digestion. Christ, however, not only taught the foundation-principles of true morality, but He removed away the hindrances to its exercise. As when He said to the helplessly feeble or crippled, "Take up thy bed and walk," He gave the power with the command. He took the curse on Himself which separated God from man by becoming an atonement for sin on the cross, and He cured the disease which separated man from God when He became, by his sufferings and victory, the Life for all who should believe in Him. He sent down the Holy Spirit with this Life to be given to men. The curse and the disease being removed, the heart is again able to work effectively, and a true moral life, not of the surface only, but of the whole man, in the

depths of his being, becomes possible. Christ not only was, but could have been, the only effective moral Teacher that the world has seen, because He alone had the power, as the Son of God in the flesh, to place man in a position where a genuine moral life became possible. The whole action of the soul was deranged, and there needed some elixir of life to bring it back to a healthy condition, such as He alone could impart by his sacrifice of Himself and by the bestowal of life through the influence of the Holy Ghost.

Having considered the nature of true morality,—that it is not merely in surface action, but in the inner depths of feeling,—and the possibility of such morality in Christ's atonement and life, we would regard now its universal active principle—love. The motive power of sin is selfishness—to be clearly distinguished from self-love. I become engrossed with myself, and have little caring for others if I may pamper my own

love of selfish pleasure. This selfishness fosters pride, hatred, jealousy, wrath, unholy anger, malice, and every other evil feeling. Self-love, on the other hand, is a regard to my own honour and character and dignity, and exists in vigour where there are the most kind and generous feelings towards others. Selfishness is necessarily cold and heartless, leading, so far as it prevails, to isolation and cruelty and baseness of every kind. It is the motive power of sin, in every variety of aspect, and its strong incentive.

Love is the very opposite of this selfishness. It unites the soul to God, and makes us to desire, from the fulness of the heart, the glory of God and the good of men. Love to God inspires the soul with an indescribable joy as we contemplate God and his goodness, and renders it our greatest pleasure to do his will. We feel that we owe everything to Him, that He is our Creator and Preserver and Benefactor, that He is most gracious and

kind in all his care of us. We see Him in the glories of creation around us; in the beauties of the earth, in the magnificence of its landscapes, in the luxuriance of its foliage, in the variety and exquisite delicacy of its flowers, in the strength and grandeur of its great oceans, in the sublimity of those starry regions which tell of the immensity of his universe. We feel that He, the Creator and Preserver of all these things, is most good and gracious to us, especially in the work of our salvation. When we contemplate God in redemption, and see in Him a Father and a Friend, all nature speaks to us with a voice never heard before. As we meditate on his goodness, his loving-kindness, his gentleness, we are filled with that rhapsodic love to Him which finds utterance in so many of the Psalms. "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord which made heaven and earth." The heart over-

flows with love to God. The Holy Ghost reveals God to us in his fatherly kindness, and Christ in his brotherly tenderness. Inspired thus with the love of God in Christ, we run to do his will. It is now no bondage, but our greatest delight, to do those things which are pleasing to Him. As a loving son or daughter feels it a joy to study the wishes of revered and devoted parents, the child of God, knowing Him as a most gracious Father, takes great pleasure in his service. The commandments of God are no longer burdensome or grievous. As expressed in the hundred and nineteenth Psalm, they are the subject of constant meditation; they are seen in their beauty and purity and benevolence, and they are felt in their refreshing and guiding influences.

This love to God in Christ produces love to our fellow-men. We cannot meditate on God's love, on his great liberality in the gift of the Son for us, and on the free pardon

of our sins through Him, and retain feelings of bitterness and animosity to any of our brethren. When we feel what sin is, and remember God's forgiveness of it, fully, freely, and for ever, we cannot indulge feelings of hatred, anger, and vengeance, on account of wrongs done to ourselves. We cannot experience the greatness of God's loving-kindness without loving our brother also, and earnestly desiring his good. We may indeed see in him much that is unlovable, but we think of what Christ sees and forgives in us. We love men because Christ has so loved us; and the more devoted we are to Him, the more do we delight to be a blessing to them.

This love to God and love to man is shown by Christ to be the motive power of all truly virtuous or holy action. It affects the heart with its emotions,—and not the mere outward conduct. It leads not to a constrained deportment, a bondage to law, in which the

outer and inner lives are inconsistent with each other, but to a free and healthy moral action in which the whole soul, in all its parts, renders obedience to God. Thus we obey God because our renewed nature prompts us to do so.

Regarding this obedience in the light of the Ten Commandments, it is no bondage to worship God, or to restrain ourselves from giving the worship which we owe to Him to other beings, for we hate the very thought of giving to the creature that which is due to God alone, or of associating any name with his. Christ, indeed, we worship, but because He is very God of very God, as well as our fellow-man. There is no difficulty in refusing to take God's name in vain, for we cannot speak of that holy name without the most devout reverence and the warmest affection. To use it thoughtlessly or carelessly is repulsive to every feeling of the heart. It is no bondage to set apart special times for the worship of God, to take the rest of that day which He, in his mercy,

has appointed. Such worship and such holy rest, by means of which we are able calmly, apart from the world and its business, to meditate on God's gracious dealings, becomes our highest enjoyment in life. And in our relations to men there is no difficulty, where love prevails, in showing honour to our parents and to those to whom reverence is due. We become ashamed of the feelings of hatred, jealousy, wrath, malice, which are expressed in the deed of murder, but which are rampant in the hearts of multitudes who never imbrue their hands in their brethren's blood. We resist impure and unholy thoughts which belong to the corrupt and degraded nature of sin. We take not others' goods, but rejoice in their prosperty. We hate slander and false witness and lying of every species, and we cultivate truth and uprightness in our dealings with all. We covet not our neighbours' property and comforts, but wish him every blessing with them. We do not attain,

indeed, in one day, nor even in a lifetime, to perfection in such feelings, because the evil nature is not wholly subdued, but these are the invariable fruits of love, so far as it rules the life. This is the morality of that new nature, breathed into the soul from Christ by the Holy Ghost, which cannot sin because it is born of God.

This principle of love to God and man, shown by Christ to lie at the basis of all moral action, is the only source of pure and genuine moral life. All outward morality, not proceeding from this principle, though necessary for the peace and safety of society, which, were there no law, would be a Pandemonium, is but a playing on the surface—but an attempt to regulate by constraint the conduct, so as to prevent the elements of evil from appearing. We would not underrate the importance of the laws which regulate society and the intercourse of individuals, or of the civil and criminal codes necessary for the

punishment of evil-doers and the protection of the just. If there were not such laws, written and unwritten, there would be no order nor security. And further, the laws of the well-ordered family, the laws of the well-regulated community, the laws of the justly-governed country,—all aid and strengthen the conscience in its condemnation of sin. Where parents do not bring up their children to observe proper rules of conduct to themselves and to each other, where offences are dealt with lightly in family and social intercourse, or where the government is despised by the people, men become lawless and disobedient, and the voice of conscience is silenced. The law in all its branches, written and unwritten, family, social, and national, is the schoolmaster to lead men to Christ. Most important is it, therefore, that law should exist and be maintained as long as there is evil in the world, though it be, in many cases, but an outward restraint, not affecting the deep feelings of the heart.

But still the only genuine morality is that which is based on inward affection, and which is the outgoing of the purity of a loving and devoted spirit. Even beautiful family life is seen, not in those who are merely observant of outward decorum, but in those who heartily love each other, with whom the kindness and watchfulness of parents and the devotion of children and the attention of brothers and sisters are based on genuine affection, where the fire, lit at the altar of God, spreads its genial and warming influence over the whole household. True national life and genuine patriotism are found only where there is the mutual regard of citizens for each other and due reverence for those placed in authority over them. The domestic or social or national fabric has little stability where there is no heartfelt sympathy among those who compose it. The essence of all enduring moral life, as shown even by the aspect of the world's ordinary affairs, is that love, taught and implanted

by Christ, which unites the soul to the Creator in loyal devotion and affection. Love to God in Christ, and love to men for the sake of Christ—these alone will produce fruits of holiness; these are the basis of that genuine morality which will endure not only through time but through eternity.

Finally, we are driven by the deep moral system of Christ to feel the necessity of the regenerating influence of the Holy Ghost. These precepts, searching as they do to the depths of the soul, could have no bearing on us, with our evil, carnal hearts, had Christ not obtained for us the gift of the Spirit. If men would be pure and holy within, walking—not seemingly only, but really—according to the principles of virtue, they must be possessed of that power which comes from above. All mere outward codes of morality will fade away, like a garment we have long worn, and leave us naked, the victims of evil passions, as before. Righteousness,

which is to endure, must be inwrought in us, possessing our whole being, influencing all our affections, making us to rejoice in God, and to glorify Him in our body and spirit which are his. Such righteousness can be obtained only through the action within us of the Holy Ghost who creates us anew, who strengthens us to overcome evil, and who prepares us for that perfect holiness which we shall enjoy for ever, if truly Christ's servants, in the sanctuary above.

V.

THE GREAT PHYSICIAN.

DISEASE and pain are the attendants of man from the cradle to the grave. No earthly power or riches can rescue from their influences. By skilled treatment they may, to some extent, be resisted and overcome; but even the most skilled physicians are subject, as others, to their power. They are the signs of man's mortality, the preparations for death which, more or less speedily, overtakes all. It were easy to dilate on the aspects of disease, with which we are familiar. It is heartrending to witness the sufferings of those under its power. Many would give all that they have obtained in the struggles of a long life to be

rid of such sufferings, even for days or weeks. There is an enjoyment in health and vigour which we scarcely know or appreciate, till we lose them. Disease has its root in the present mortal condition of man. It is a weapon in the hands of death. In many of its aspects it defies all human skill to eradicate it, as when vital organs are affected, or it has become inherent in the constitution. In such cases medical treatment may assuage suffering or prolong life, but can do nothing towards the removal of the cause.

The power of Christ, as the Great Physician, was shown in his healing all diseases, no matter from what cause produced or what power they had attained; by his curing them, also, not by treatment, but by the direct putting forth of some unseen and unknown power. That poor woman may have spent all her living in physicians, as many thousands have done, and have been none the better, but rather have grown worse; yet she

has but to touch Him, and she is made whole. That man, blind from his birth, may have no proper organism of the eye; but yet he is made at once to see clearly. That lame man may have such a contraction of the limbs that by no skill can he be made to move one step; yet at once he becomes strong, and takes up his couch, and carries it to his house. That wretched-looking creature may be raving mad, with a brain organically diseased; but in a moment he becomes rational, and follows his Deliverer with meekness and joy. Life itself may have departed, and the body may have even lain in the tomb; but at once, by a word, the heart begins again to beat, the life-blood flows through the veins, and he that was dead comes forth, full of manly vigour. Christ's healing power was different altogether from that of physicians. It was a power without limits or boundaries, a power that was applied without the use of means, and a power that was always instantaneous in its action.

There have been, especially in recent times, many speculations as to the method of this power. Some have supposed that Christ, by his knowledge of higher physical laws, overruled those physical laws with which we are acquainted. We know not how He wrought these wondrous works. There was, however, in his exercise of power the appearance of a new creation. A human body, dead as any other piece of inanimate matter, must have had a new gift of life to make it breathe and move. An eye disconnected from the brain, rolling in darkness in its socket, could not have been restored but by the hand of Him who created the human eye. A limb naturally distorted could not be made strong and vigorous but by the putting forth of new creative energy. Christ cured every kind of disease,—and all with equal speed and facility. These miracles afforded, therefore, a clear testimony to the Divine power of Christ, so that He appealed to their evidence most conclusively. "Though

ye believe not me, believe the works." If we allow that the records of Christ's miracles are true narratives, we can have no doubt as to the Divine power and knowledge of Him who wrought them. They were works that could have proceeded only from One possessed of all power and knowledge. It is as impossible to impart life to any creature that is dead, or to any organ of the body that is destroyed, as it is to create a world.

The miracles of Christ, though so marvellous, were unostentatious. There was no calling for fire to descend from heaven, which might have gratified the giddy multitude. There was no summoning together of persons to witness them. There were no preparations for them. Calmly and without display, Christ did his work, as He passed along the highways, or walked in the secluded valleys, or stood in the streets of the villages. He was always ready, at all times and in all places, to heal those who

came to Him. But though his miracles were not fitted to excite a vague and superstitious wonder, as a sign from heaven might have done, they were really wonders such as the world had never before witnessed, or even dreamt of. The more we consider them, the more do we feel that they were the works of the Son of God. His apostles afterwards wrought such miracles, but only in his name. But He did them by his own inherent power. He appealed not to the Father, but He avowedly accomplished them by a power which belonged to Himself. In their magnitude, combined with the absence of display, there was a resemblance to all the works of God. These works proved Him to be possessed of divine majesty. In their method, as well as in their power, they gave evidence of the greatness of his mission.

Though it is not our province here to refer to the credibility of the Gospel narratives, we may note, in connection with this subject

of Christ's miracles, that a strong evidence is given of the truth and also inspiration of the Gospels in the method in which the miracles are described. They are spoken of in a simple and unostentatious manner, as indisputable facts of history. There is no such attempt to magnify them by sensational surroundings as is invariably made in descriptions of fictitious miracles. The simple and matter-of-fact narratives of the miracles afford a strong testimony to their truth. It is evident, in the very method of the writers, that they believed implicitly the facts they recorded; and it is also evident that they could not have believed a large number of these facts, if not true, for they were, in many cases, themselves professed eye-witnesses of the miracles they recorded.

Let us not undervalue, as is the custom of many, even of the defenders of Christianity, the testimony of the miracles of our Lord. These miracles, if wrought as described, gave

evidence of a power which was Divine, and, being associated with the distinct claim of Christ to be the Son of God, they ratified beyond dispute this claim.

There was another characteristic, it is to be noted further, of Christ's miracles, which gave the strongest corroborative evidence of their proceeding from a heavenly source. They were not mere wonders. They were wonders wrought invariably for a special object—the assuaging of human suffering and misery. All of them, without exception, were of this nature. They were expressions of love and pity. In no case, except that of the raising of Lazarus, was there any preparation. That miracle was very specially intended to give evidence of Christ's power to the Jewish nation, as such, and to strengthen the faith of the disciples, after his death. Still, even this was a miracle of love and of mercy, wrought on behalf of friends much endeared. All Christ's other miracles were

done without preparation, as each new occasion presented itself. He did not press his cures on any, nor prepare the subjects for them. They came to Him, having heard of his fame; and every one who came and entreated to be healed was at once made whole. It mattered not what was the kind of the disease or the nature of its symptoms. He gave sight to the blind, feet to the lame, ears to the deaf, strength to the helpless, intelligence to the insane, life to the dead. In all his miracles, He was influenced by kindness and sympathy. Never was there exhibited such gracious compassion. The great men of this world may, occasionally or frequently, use their power benignantly, but who can depend on them always? They may become wearied with the afflictions of the distressed. But not so with Christ. He listened to all who came to Him, without one exception. His disciples entreat the people not to press on Him, as numbers

crowd round Him to be healed; but *He* encourages them to come. They rebuke those bringing little children to Him, as if these were unworthy of his notice; but *He* says, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not." Weary with his journey on foot, under a broiling sun, for it was midday, He enters freely into conversation with the woman of Samaria, whom He knows to be a great sinner, and ministers to her the word of life. He was always accessible; and the more forlorn and miserable the person who appealed to Him for aid, the more ready was He to give it. He looked with special interest and favour on those whom men generally despise. The blind eyes, the contorted limbs, the pale, sickly countenance, the expression betraying grief and anguish, the widow's tears, attracted always his attention, because He rejoiced to relieve sadness and distress. No man has ever showed anything approaching to the

kindness of the Son of Man. Christianity has done much to assuage the sufferings of the physically wretched, and has produced many who have followed, at a distance, the example of the Master; but none have ever been like to Him in depth and universality of sympathy.

This tenderness shown by Christ for the unfortunate is utterly opposed to the instincts of the natural heart, as depraved by sin. In even cultivated heathen countries the aged, the bedridden, the helpless, are often left to starve and die. The more we look to the miracles of Christ, and the more we consider the depth of pity shown in them, the more must we regard with wonder those Divine qualities of mercy and compassion which were expressed in them, as never before or since, in the acts of man. How mistaken are those who, in the presence of Christ's wondrous tenderness and sympathy, in which He so far surpassed all his followers

of any age, would betake themselves to other intercessors, to stand between them and the Divine Saviour. This very love of Christ, his universal compassion for the sorrowful, his gracious answers to the prayers of the afflicted, is as strong evidence of his divinity as the supernatural power required to accomplish the miracles. His mercy is as superior to that of even the best men that the world has seen, as the bright and clear light of the sun excels that of the artificial lights of earth.

But it is especially in his healing the diseases of the soul, so much more hideous and fatal than those of the body, that Christ shows Himself to be the good Physician. In the relief of many from the influence of evil spirits, which had driven them to madness, by entering in to take possession of the tenement of a diseased brain, He represented a work of the vastest importance, for the accomplishment of which He came from heaven to earth. He brought, during his life, many

great sinners to repentance, notably among others Mary Magdalene, who was honoured to be the first to see Him after his resurrection; who loved much because she was forgiven much. He went among publicans and sinners, longing to restore them, so that the narrow-minded Pharisees, with their jaundiced eyes, charged Him with approving their sins.

The diseases of the soul are infinitely worse and more repulsive of aspect than the most loathsome diseases of the body. Those wretched creatures, often with purses well filled, who are degrading their youth and defying conscience, in the indulgence of carnal vices, from whom there is heard, as they gloat over their vices, the noisy laughter of the fool, which is like the crackling of thorns under the pot, are to be pitied more than the decrepid or bedridden. If they live, unrepentant, for a few years, they will become hardened and obdurate. Their youth fades when life in others is scarce begun,

and they become, whether men or women, the most despicable of objects, going down often, with ribald blasphemy on their lips, to an accursed grave. That miserable man who is the slave of drunkenness, ruining himself and his family, and cursing with his vice his earthly existence, with the drunkard's woe before him, is, in one respect, an object fitted to move our deepest compassion. That respectable sinner, puffed up with pride, covered over with a thin coating of external morality, but inwardly rotten and corrupt and basely selfish, is suffering from a malignant disease which, except it be cured, will soon be beyond remedy. He is dishonourable in the spirit of his transactions, though he takes care, for appearance' sake, to regard the letter of the law. With the burden of his guilt lying upon him, inwardly full of deceit and guile, he will soon, unless he repent, be exposed in his native deformity to the great judgment of God. That hollow

professor—whitewashed sepulchre—who seeks to make a gain of godliness by winning the applause of men for qualities which he does not possess, but which he labours to make others and even himself think he has, will soon be beyond all help of recovery. His hypocrisy and baseness will be made manifest in the day of the Lord's appearing. These and the numerous other phases of soul disease are far more terrible than any sicknesses of the body. The eye of the Divine Christ, which saw beneath the surface to the inner heart of men, beheld, in their souls, diseases of the most malignant type, which, unless eradicated, must speedily bring them to ruin, not for time only, but for eternity. These diseases He desired specially to cure. He held out his hand to rescue every perishing soul who longed to be delivered. This healing of the souls of men is the great work which Christ accomplishes now. Having given Himself as a sacrifice

for sin, having entered within the veil through the blood of his own sacrifice, there to plead for us with God, as our High Priest, He dispenses freely the blessings of spiritual life and health to all who come to Him that they may have life.

If the healing of the body, as accomplished by Christ, required Divine power,—curing, as He did, those born blind, those crippled from birth, those afflicted with deadly diseases of all kinds, those who were actually dead—much more does the healing of the soul need this Divine influence. Its diseases cannot be cured by any skill of man. There is the curse of God hanging over him, which must be removed before the cure can be attempted, and there is the corruption of the heart, which is deep and ineradicable. We do not need to look to great sinners, nor to notorious vices or crimes, to see the deadly nature of this universal disease of sin. Let any one try to remove it by his own effort, and he will

soon be convinced of its irresistible power. He may overcome some special evil habit, but he cannot deliver his soul from unholy thoughts and hateful feelings. The proud cannot become humble; the self-seeking and grasping cannot become benevolent and large-hearted; the carnal cannot resist fleshly lusts; the vile and crafty cannot become straightforward and honourable; the vain talker cannot become wise and thoughtful and careful of the reputation of others. Sin, in those endless varieties of aspect, in which it shows its power in different minds, may be externally glossed over, but it cannot by any effort be uprooted. Those who have sought to practise righteousness by their own unaided powers, have overcome one form of evil, only to make way for another. Luther, Bunyan, and many of the best of God's servants afterwards, tried for a time this self-righteous method, but confessed that they found their efforts to be vain. Those who have in deep earnest

hated evil, and tried to overcome it, have all felt their powerlessness, and have at length gladly come to Christ to be healed. Nothing but Divine power can cure the disease of the soul, or restore to it that love to God and self-denying love to others with which it was created at first. Such love, in its purity and power, those who have spoken and written of virtue have rarely even imagined. Christ proclaimed the greatness of the disease of the soul, and shattered to pieces all mere human devices for its cure, when He brought to light the nature of true virtue, in the Sermon on the Mount. Who can venture to say that he has fulfilled or can fulfil the law of God in his hidden emotions as there revealed? He who, convinced of the depth of the disease, provided the remedy: "Ye must be born again. . . . . That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." And He not only provided this remedy, but He continually applied it.

He called, when on earth, many poor wandering souls around Him, delivering them from even the vilest forms of sin, and filling them with peace and joy. And when the work of his atonement was done, and He had ascended to the right hand of power, He poured down the Spirit, according to his promise, and multitudes living in sin were filled with joy and peace in believing. And ever since, this work of healing has been continued. Cured by the power of the living Christ, through the sacrifice He offered, many have gone on their way rejoicing, still burdened with remnants of sin, but renewed in the spirit of their mind, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, passing upward from the pilgrimage of life to the perfected glory of the Church in heaven.

The greatness of the love shown by Christ in the healing of human souls, in seeking after the lost, will be the subject of never-ending adoration and praise. To his pure and holy

mind what could be more repulsive than the grovelling views of a carnal, degraded nature? We ourselves, when raised a little height above them, are repelled by the aspects of grosser sins. It is very difficult to love the unlovely. But when we consider the pure spirit of Christ, infinitely high in all its ideas and aspirations, as shown in his words handed down to us, how revolting must have been to Him the schemes, and flattery, and debasement, and narrow-minded selfishness, and sordid ideas, and petty ambitions, and cowardly falsehoods, and filthy imaginations of those whom He came to heal. How unlovely was sinful human nature, even at its best, to Him! How great, then, that compassion, that sympathy and tenderness, surpassing far whatmere man, or even angel, could ever have conceived of, which led Him to delight in seeking after such unworthy beings, in bearing with the hideous and revolting aspects of their sins, in associating Himself with

them, and in plucking them as brands from the burning. He who had such love as to do this was no mere creature, but was a partaker with God of that forbearance and compassion shown by Him in his bountiful gifts to the unthankful and evil, and in his long-suffering endurance of the hardened and reprobate.

Christ heals the soul by a word, as He healed the bodies of men in a moment, and He heals all who cry earnestly to Him for help. He had not, as other physicians, to apply remedies or to take time for the effecting of cures. The blind saw, the lame walked, the deaf heard, the dead arose in a moment, as if there had been no disease or death. Let Him only speak the word, and men are made whole of whatever disease they have. A new life is implanted, and those that are healed proceed with vigour on their way, and overcome, with more and more success, the old nature and its lusts.

There was not one case of rejection of

appeals to Christ for this healing power. Multitudes of the sick never came to be cured, when He walked through the villages of Palestine, but none who did come were disappointed. How should the remembrance of this fact encourage all, however laden with sin, to come to Him to be restored! The counsels of God are known only to Himself. What folly would it have been in a sick man, approaching Jesus when on earth, to have considered whether it was designed of God that he was to be healed or not. He felt his disease; he cried for help, and he obtained it. Known to God are all his ways. Those whom the Father hath given to Christ will come to Him; but if any man feel the evil and misery of his sinful state, and long for Christ's salvation, and seek it earnestly, he will find it. Christ refuses none, and sends none disappointed away. Let us adore Him as that great Physician who has come into the world to cure all maladies and to dispense all blessings.

VI.

THE MESSIANIC PROPHECIES.

IN tracing the relation of Christ to the history of the world, it is necessary to consider the Messianic prophecies. From the beginning to the close of the Old Testament we find unmistakable allusions to the appearance of a special prophet, who was to manifest the light of God to the world. That the testimony was plain and emphatic is proved by the fact that, at the advent of Christ, no doubt was entertained among the Jews as to the coming of a Messiah. They not only expected a Messiah, but they expected that He was to come about the time that He appeared. Many of the other nations had also traditions, pointing to such an event.

If we examine the Old Testament, we find that the Messianic prophecies abound in all parts, from the beginning to the close. We are told that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent. There was the general promise to the patriarchs that in their seed should all the nations of the earth be blessed. Jacob on his dying couch said, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come"—that is, the Prince of Peace—"and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be." Moses, in his farewell address to the people, said, "The Lord thy God shall raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, like unto me; unto Him shall ye hearken." When the children of Israel were filled with terror at the appearance of the Lord at Horeb, the Lord sent unto them this message: "They have well spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto

thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and He shall speak unto them all that I shall command Him." This Prophet was to be the living embodiment of the law which was delivered from Sinai.

The farther history advances, the more explicit do the propheoies regarding Christ become, the more clearly do the person and character of the promised Messiah, the Anointed, appear. In the Psalms there are numerous references to his person, his offices —as Prophet, Priest, and King—and his sufferings. In the second Psalm there is the announcement of his kingdom. It is no ordinary being who is associated with God, and termed specially the Anointed of the Lord; who is called the Son of God, and to whom the heathen are promised for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession; of whom it is said in conclusion, "Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him." In the twenty-second Psalm

there is a vivid description of the agony of soul of the Messiah, and of the great results to follow from it: "All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee." In the forty-fifth Psalm there is a description of the Messiah and his victories in language which could be applied to no earthly king: "Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever. Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee. Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath

anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." Here He is plainly designated as both God and man. In the seventy-second Psalm there is a celebration of the glory of one greater than man, though associated with him: "His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in Him: all nations shall call Him blessed." In the eighty-ninth Psalm there is evident allusion to one who was far to transcend the glory of David or of Solomon: "The Lord is our defence; and the Holy One of Israel is our King. . . Also I will make Him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth. My mercy will I keep for Him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with Him. His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven." In the hundred and tenth Psalm there is a celebration of the kingly and priestly offices of the Messiah: "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make

thine enemies thy footstool. . . . Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth. The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." In the hundred and eighteenth Psalm there is evident allusion to the Messiah: "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doings; it is marvellous in our eyes." In many other Psalms there are references to Him as Divine. These cannot be ascribed to Eastern magniloquence. The Jews above all people were taught to exalt Jehovah far above every created being, and it was entirely contrary to the spirit of their religion to impute to any man the attributes of God, or to confound the kingly and the priestly offices.

We desire to take up no ground that may have even the appearance of difficulty, or we might refer to wisdom personified in the book

of Proverbs and to the Song of Solomon, in which there is plainly a representation of the love of Christ to his Church, and of the Church to Him, though we do not need to give to each verse a symbolical meaning, but rather to consider the poem as a whole, and the verses and paragraphs as forming parts of its complete representation.

We pass on to the direct and most full prophecies of Isaiah. In the eleventh chapter it is said: "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots: and the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. . . . With righteousness shall He judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth." And again: "In that day there shall be a root of Jesse"—a root, and not merely a branch—"which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall

the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious."

From the fortieth chapter of this book to the end of it, there are the clearest descriptions of the coming of the Messiah, of the nature of his mission, of his sufferings, and of his victory. This portion of prophecy is one continued celebration of his work and reward. The fortieth and forty-first chapters prepare for the event, like the music which precedes the ushering in of some scene in a drama. In the forty-second chapter He stands forth to view in person, delineated with accuracy of description. The Lord, after previously denouncing the vanity and folly of idolatry in the failure of all efforts of its agents truly to prophesy, announces thus his elect: "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my Spirit upon Him: He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry"—that is, shout—"nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be

heard in the street. A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench: He shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till He have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law." Could any description more aptly portray the aspect and mission of Christ when He came? The prophecy proceeds: "Thus saith God the Lord, He that created the heavens, and stretched them out; He that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; He that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein: I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house." How does the prophet describe the circumstances of the Son of Man, as he appeared, in the fifty-second

chapter: "Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, He shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men."

And then follows that description of his sufferings and victory which all the efforts of unbelieving Judaism have failed to get rid of. It stands as the rocky cliff against which the waves break themselves in vain. It plainly refers to an individual and not to a people. It describes the raising up of the Messiah in a manner contrary to all Jewish hopes, and fitted to thwart surface Jewish pride. It tells most tragically of his griefs and troubles, and states emphatically the cause why they were borne: "Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement

of our peace was upon Him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not his mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgressions of my people was He stricken. . . . He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong; because He hath poured out his soul unto death: and He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bare the sin of many,

and made intercession for the transgressors." This chapter cannot be shaken in its testimony. It points to a person, and it is a faithful picture of Him who died on the cross of Calvary.

The same narrative being continued, it is announced in the fifty-fifth chapter, "Behold, I have given Him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people." His royal office of preacher, and the method of its exercise, are vividly described in the sixty-first chapter: "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound . . . To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting

of the Lord, that He might be glorified." In the sixty-third chapter it is said: "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. . . . I have trodden the wine-press alone; and of the people there was none with me." Thus, all through the latter portion of this prophecy of Isaiah, connecting its various parts together, forming its bond of unity, there are foretold the mission and glory of the Messiah.

In the prophet Jeremiah there are frequent unmistakable references to the coming of a Messiah, of the seed of David. In the twenty-third chapter it is said: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely:

and this is his name whereby He shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness." He is described here first as a man, a branch of David, and then as God, the Lord our Righteousness, while his representative character, as "our righteousness," is also spoken of. In the thirty-third chapter of this prophet it is said: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and He shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith he shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness"—an allusion again to his divinity and humanity, and to his becoming the righteousness of his people.

In the prophecies of Ezekiel, the prospects of Christ's kingdom are described, in suc-

cessive visions, with the most brilliant and sublime imagery. We quote only one passage. After depicting the purification and the glory of Israel in the thirty-seventh chapter, the prophet proceeds: "And David my servant shall be King over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children for ever: and my servant David shall be their prince for ever. Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore."

In the most remarkable prophecy of Daniel, which is quite peculiar in its character, the

coming of the Messiah, and the time of his appearing, and the events to precede and to follow, are clearly foretold. In the second chapter, where the prophet and statesman describes and interprets the strange dream of Nebuchadnezzar, the period of Christ's advent is given as contemporary with the Roman empire. After that empire has been portrayed in the previous verses in a manner that no one can misunderstand, it is said: "In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people"—that is, it shall not be conquered, as the other kingdoms—"but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever." Nothing could more aptly describe the rise of Christ's kingdom than the image of a stone cut out of the mountain without hands. Nothing could better mark its progress than this stone becoming a great mountain and

silently breaking in pieces the other kingdoms by some internal force.

In the seventh chapter of Daniel there is a most sublime vision of the Ancient of Days, "whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him: thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened." The prophet proceeds, referring rather to the everlasting kingdom of Christ than to his first appearing: "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him: his dominion is an everlasting do-

minion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

In the ninth chapter of Daniel there is a most clear statement of the time of the appearing of the Messiah. This prophecy was a chief means of leading the Jews to look for Him about the period of his birth. It is stated that the angel Gabriel appeared to Daniel, after long fasting and prayer, as about to give him skill and understanding, because he was greatly beloved. "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgressions, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and

the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for Himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week He shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations He shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate." Here is a most distinct promise not only of the coming of the Messiah, but of the time of his appearing. The prophetic week was a period clearly understood. The seventy weeks were four hundred and ninety years. The threescore and two weeks, from the command to build Jerusalem to the beginning of the ministry of our Lord, were four hundred and thirty-four

years. The one week was seven years, including our Lord's ministry and the three or four years after his ascension, during which period the covenant was confirmed with many of the believing Jews, who, in opposition to the nation as such, accepted Jesus as the true Messiah. The remaining seven weeks were forty-nine years, which intervened between the consolidation of the church and the destruction of Jerusalem, clearly foretold in the twenty-fourth verse. The prophecy is transparent in its meaning, and depicted the times and the facts as they occurred. It could not have been more accurate had it been written, as a description, after the destruction of Jerusalem and the scattering abroad of the Jews.

In connection with these Messianic prophecies, we would only further quote the last book of the Old Testament. Malachi, writing at a period considerably later than any of the other prophets, reproves the people for

their declension, since their return from captivity, and foretells the coming of the Messiah, with a voice rather of warning than of joy. He says in the third chapter: "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, He shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth? For He is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' sope: and He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." In the very closing verses of this first grand division of Scripture, when the prophetic voice was to be silenced for centuries, there is a promise of the Messiah: "Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with

healing in his wings;" and in the last words, it is said: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth" —or the land—"with a curse."

When we thus glance at the Old Testament prophecies, we cannot wonder that the Jews universally expected a Messiah about the time that He appeared. There is of necessity a certain degree of mystery in all prophecy; for if the events of a future age were described even with perfect clearness we could not understand them, and we should greatly misrepresent them in our thoughts. We cannot definitely understand an age of which there has been no experience in history. There are events, also, of too deep meaning to be clearly comprehended, till all the surroundings are seen. The object of Christ's

humiliation could not have been fully fathomed by the understandings of the people before the events had occurred. It is also to be noticed that, had He been known, beyond all doubt or trial of faith, to be the Messiah, when He appeared, his humiliation would have been impossible. All classes—even the rulers, and the scribes and pharisees—would have bowed before Him, for they could not have dreamt of resisting directly the very messenger of God. But though there was thus a sufficient degree of mystery to test men, and to separate the true from the false, there was sufficient clearness to show that a Messiah would come, that He would suffer, and that He would obtain the deliverance of his people. We might show how, from his birth onwards, the identity of Jesus with the promised Messiah stood out to view, more and more clearly, till no room was left for doubt, when He had completed his work and entered into his glory.

The importance of the Old Testament, in casting light on the person and work of Christ, cannot be over-estimated. We remember how, on the day of his resurrection, meeting with the two disciples going to Emmaus, Christ entered into friendly conversation with them, and after hearing their hesitating statement, He said, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." The apostles founded in great part on these ancient prophecies the claim of Christianity to the recognition of the world. The coming of the Messiah was announced, age after age. A nation was separated from others to maintain a worship free from idolatry; to produce men, called of the Holy Ghost, to write those oracles and prophecies, designed to strengthen

faith in every period; and finally, to give birth to Him who was to bless all nations, and to shed abroad his light through the world. If we wish to understand the relation of Christ to the race, let us meditate on the descriptions given of his mission and character in the Old Testament Scriptures. The most striking pictures of his kingly and priestly offices, and the deepest insight into the feelings of his soul during his agony, are to be found in the Psalms and the Prophets. Christianity must be comparatively superficial, if it separate itself from that soil, in which God firmly planted it.

The prophecies regarding Christ extend to the New Testament, foreshadowing, there, those great events which have taken place since Christianity was promulgated by the apostles, or which are yet to come. The Old Testament prophecies touched on a period much later than the coming of the Messiah in the flesh—that of Daniel, for instance, ex-

tending to the end of the world. But the New Testament prophecies throw, naturally, greater light on those events which were to take place between Christ's ascension and the last judgment. These New Testament prophecies it is well that we should study, if we would be prepared for those changes which are yet to take place in the world, or fitted even to perform our own work, effectively.

It is most important that this evidence of prophecy should not be slighted. The Scripture not only teaches, but proves beyond question, that prophecy embraces the description of events to take place in future, and even in remote, ages. If it be so, there is surely irresistible evidence that the voice of God speaks in these holy oracles. The foreknowledge of the future can belong only to Him who pre-disposes and pre-arranges all events, and who understands and controls their causes. The threads of events are so complicated and interwoven, that no mere creature

can possibly look far into the future. If there are, then, the most distinct prophecies, as cannot be doubted when we look dispassionately at those we have quoted, and many others,—it is the Spirit of the living and eternal God, moving in the souls of the writers, that has enabled them to unveil the events of the coming and distant ages. No testimony to a revelation could be stronger.

VII.

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

IT cannot be denied by any that the resurrection of Christ is the event of events in the history of the world. It is felt by sceptics to afford such resistless evidence of his Divine mission, that the fact, they know, must be disproved before they can advance one step. The pantheist and positivist both reject it off-hand, as an impossible event, according to their systems. It is to be noted that one or other of these philosophies is the basis of almost all modern sceptical writing on the subject. It is thus taken for granted that the narrative of the resurrection is not true, and theories are suggested as to the method

in which the story could have arisen. It is treated as we would treat a legend or fiction. This is not sufficiently observed in England, where philosophical systems are not much studied, and surface views of things are often much esteemed, if only smartly stated. Thus arguments and theories, based on a foregone philosophical conclusion, are freely quoted, as if the resurrection had been disproved on strictly historical grounds. There must always be a clear discernment of the basis of such denials, or we shall wander in mist and confusion. It is one thing to assert that this and all other supernatural events are impossible, because the writer is a pantheist or positivist; it is another thing to assert that there is not sufficient historical evidence of them, where such philosophy is denied or ignored. In the former case, the alleged facts are disposed of at once without any inquiry, and an attempt is necessarily made to show how they have found a place in the imagina-

tion and traditions of the world; in the other case, the evidence must be clearly and dispassionately sifted, and must be shown to be insufficient. These systems of philosophy referred to, by which man would make his mind the measure of all things, are not easily established. What is man that he can ascend to the mountains, so to speak, which command a view of the universe, and declare that there is an unchanging and unchangeable order? Order there is, but who originated this order, which bears on it the stamp of intelligence? And if an intelligent Being, why cannot He change or modify it as He pleases? Intelligent order, undevised and uncontrolled, is a contradiction in thought. And a Supreme Intelligence, bound Himself by invariable laws, is an impossible idea. It is folly for men to deny the possibility of a supernatural action, because the laws of nature are seen to be uniform in ordinary circumstances—as great folly as it would be for a child to

imagine that there was no controlling power in the family, because its affairs were wisely regulated by certain rules and principles. Why should not material order be interfered with, or actively regulated, for certain grand spiritual purposes?

Leaving, therefore, this region of foregone conclusions, founded on a baseless philosophy, we would glance at the evidence of this, the most wonderful of all the alleged facts of history. No event has ever been so well established as a fact on purely historic grounds. Jesus was seen after his resurrection—not once only, but repeatedly—by those who had been familiar, before his crucifixion, with his appearance. They had no clear expectation of the event, and were themselves astonished at its occurrence. They were not, therefore, in a frame of mind to be easily imposed on. He conversed with them much, and He gave them directions as to his mission on earth, which they rigidly followed.

At length, in the presence of a great multitude, He was seen, as stated, to ascend in the clouds to heaven.

This most extraordinary fact—the resurrection of One who had been ignominiously crucified in the presence of many thousands, at the Jewish chief festival—was proclaimed publicly in a few weeks in Jerusalem, where his crucifixion had made a great sensation, and in the presence of those who had caused Him to be put to death. Such a story, if a mere fiction, might have begun to be bruited abroad in some obscure corner many years afterwards, and then have come to be gradually credited in an ignorant age. But, here, it was proclaimed at once, in the city where Christ had been slain, to vast multitudes assembled from all parts, and in the face of the men who had been Christ's most bitter enemies. It was affirmed with great determination, testified to, indeed, on all occasions, as the fact of facts, on which the sal-

vation of the world depended; borne evidence unto in the Sanhedrim, the court which had condemned Christ for alleged blasphemy, stated at the risk of the lives of those who asserted it, many of whom, we know, were martyred for insisting on its truth.

Nothing could have been easier than to disprove these statements, if false. The tomb was known. Either the body could have been produced, or those men who said it was stolen could have given an intelligent account of the circumstances. They could surely have shown how the guards were overreached. The rulers, who were infuriated at the revival of the fame of Him whom they detested, and hoped they had destroyed, had every motive to dispute the fact of the resurrection, and exerted themselves, we cannot doubt, to the utmost to do so. But the evidence was too strong; they dared not to produce their witnesses. They had to listen to the charge made against them, in such statements as that

of Peter: "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins." They were struck dumb by the corroborative evidence given of the resurrection, and also by their own guilty knowledge of the worthlessness of the explanation attempted. The apostles spoke not only of themselves, but of a multitude familiar with his appearance, who were ready to bear witness to the fact of his ascension.

But it may be said, "What evidence is there of the truth of the book in which these alleged historic events are described?" The Acts of the Apostles can be historically traced back to the first century. But, also, that book is its own most powerful witness-bearer. The events are described with simplicity and straightforwardness, without any attempted garnishing, even with naked directness. As

all the other books of the New Testament, it represents the sin of falsehood, and even of prevarication, in the darkest light. It is here that we have the tale of Ananias and Sapphira, who, as a warning to the Church, were struck dead for prevaricating in a manner that most men would have regarded as venial. To suppose that a book so written could itself have been devised to misrepresent events as they occurred, to impose on the world a huge deception, to put this deception in the mouths of men held up as pre-eminently lovers of truth, is a literary impossibility. The doctrine of Christ's resurrection brought also no worldly gain to any, but only loss of property, and death. The book bears the evident aspect of truthfulness; and comparison of the facts that it relates with references to them in the Epistles of Paul, brings out with great clearness its marvellous minuteness and accuracy. There can, then, be no reasonable doubt that the apostles

attested the resurrection of Christ in the presence of the Jewish multitudes; and their so attesting it clearly showed, not only that they themselves believed it, but that their statements regarding it could not be refuted. They testified that which they had seen, of which they were convinced beyond all question, and for the proclamation of which they eventually died as martyrs—all except the Apostle John. Paul also, with all his earnestness on behalf of truth, and his sufferings for it, states, again and again, the appearance unto him of the risen Lord, and the words which Jesus spoke to him.

No fact of history has been better established than this fact of facts; and it carries with it everything else. It proves Christ's doctrines and promises to be true. It was not the mere return of one to life. It was the conquest of death, and the assuming, by such conquest, of a much more glorious form of humanity. When Christ arose out of the

grave, He arose not as He had fallen. His body, though it bore the marks of the spear and the nails, was now in itself immortal. By his resurrection He overcame that inexorable law, which had prevailed in the earth from the fall, by which death reigned triumphant over man. He conquered death. He laid the foundation of that victory by which all who believe in Him shall be raised from the dead. This resurrection, in connection with his atoning death, is the corner-stone of the Christian fabric. If Christ has risen and ascended, as man, to the right hand of power, He has gone to accomplish that which He promised. The Church of our human race is represented in heaven, where it shall exist for ever in the fulness of glory. If Christ has risen, He has risen as the first-fruits of them that slept, and all who are his shall rise with Him and shall live with Him for ever. We cannot separate the fact of Christ's resurrection from those great

truths which are associated with it in the Scriptures. It is the strongest testimony to the truth of his doctrine and to the security of the promises. It shows that He was the Messias, appointed of God, sent into the world from the presence of the Father, that He might be made a sacrifice for sin, the Victor over Satan and all our enemies, the Captain of salvation. As we see the risen Saviour, coming forth from the tomb, having shaken off the power of death, as Samson the ropes with which he was bound, we have the security of the fulfilment of those events foretold to happen to the Church and to the world. We have also the pledge of the victory of all who believe in Christ; of the passage of their souls to his rest at death; of the judgment when He shall come again as He was seen to go into heaven, and when the dead shall awake to give account of the deeds done in life; of the entrance of his saints in glorified form into the mansions of

blessedness, and of their living and reigning with Him for evermore.

This resurrection shows also that Christ is Lord over the present order of things, and that this earth and all that it contains must yield to his sway. If death is conquered, what is everything else in comparison? Death is master of all. It makes a mockery of human greatness. It holds in utter contempt the plans and ambitions and social status and great abilities of men. It regards not kings nor kingdoms, nobles nor men in authority, rank nor genius, power nor skill, age nor youth. It pays no respect to the honours bestowed by nations, treating them as vulgar baubles, to be torn ruthlessly from the brows of those whom, for a time, they adorn. It mocks the acquirement of riches which it snatches suddenly from him who may have spent a lifetime in gathering them. It contemns even the loftiest works of genius, removing away by

its common weapons, the man who may have laid the world under contribution, by his writings, or discoveries in science, or skill in art. His works may live, age after age, but he himself has, as others, but the short allotted span, at best. Death is master of all that this world in itself can give. When Christ overcame death, and arose from his cold embrace with renewed power, with a body even immortal, He proved his lordship over all things subject to death. He gave security that the present order of things would disappear, and that a new order would be established, under which death would be abolished.

What great results to the Church and the world lay hid in that event which took place, early on the morning of the first day of the week, in the quiet neighbourhood of Jerusalem! No event except the death of the cross was of such vast historic interest. All the victories of earth's greatest heroes over

enemies the most powerful sink into absolute nothingness, when compared with this victory. And yet it was but the seal of another victory much more marvellous—that over death spiritual, for all who through Him should obtain eternal life.

VIII.

THE INVISIBLE PRESENCE.

1.—WITH INDIVIDUAL SOULS.

CHRIST identified Himself with the God of Israel in that remarkable saying which He uttered as He wept over Jerusalem: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" None but a Divine Being could have uttered such a statement, without being guilty of blasphemy. He claims to have been that God who tended the Church and its individual members before He appeared as man.

He was, therefore, present in the world, invisibly, in the special relation of the Shepherd of the faithful, even before He came in the flesh.

When He was about to ascend on high, He gave the promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world"—a promise which none could have dared to have given, except possessed of Divine power and foreknowledge. If this promise has been fulfilled, we have unquestionable evidence of the validity of his claim to be the Son of God and the Saviour of men. Let us test its fulfilment to the faithful, individually, and to the Church at large.

Christ professes in the Gospels that He has a special relation to all redeemed souls; that, in right of this relation, having bought them with his own blood, He is in constant communion with them. He makes them to feel his presence and to know his power. He strengthens them against

temptation. He leads them in the paths of holiness. He welcomes them to his heavenly mansions. Is this presence a reality or a delusion?

The testimony of many in all ages, since the ascension of Christ, has been to its reality. They have professed to entertain for Him the deepest affection—an affection far exceeding that of any human relationship, the most close; and they have not only professed to have such feeling, but multitudes have borne the loss of all things, and even death, in attesting the reality of such affection. They have looked to Christ as, on the one hand, God, everywhere present, knowing all that happens to them, acquainted even with the secret longings of the soul, and they have given to Him the worship due only to God; and they have regarded Him, on the other hand, as the Exalted Head of the human family, dwelling in bodily presence in some place unknown, in that glorified form

with which He arose to the right hand of power, and in which He shall come again to judge the quick and the dead. Great numbers, in every age since Christ lived on earth, have attested their love to Christ, have shown its influence in their relationships to men, have been cheered and strengthened by it, in circumstances of bitter trial and sorrow, and have rejoiced in it in their dying hour. This experience of individual souls in regard to Christ is different from any other experience of the human family recorded. To love with such intensity and devotion one outwardly absent, one unknown to sight, one of whom, apparently, there is only a historic record, speaks surely of an inward relationship with which the world is unacquainted.

The more that we analyze this feeling of love to Christ, the more are we struck with its complex and peculiar character. It is, on the one hand, associated with intense reverence,

and, on the other, with childlike love and confidence. The very name of Christ suggests to the faithful the idea of infinite power. Those who cherish that name feel that, though unseen, He is at all times present, and that He is able to do for them whatsoever He will. They see in Him the Revealer of the Father, and the prevailing Intercessor with Him. They regard Him as possessed of a power and glory which will be for ever incomprehensible to the creature, as the Creator and Preserver of all things, the Sovereign of all worlds, even the most remote, the Lord of all intelligences. They feel that they stand afar off, and are as nothing in his presence. And yet with this deepest reverence there is associated the most childlike confidence and the most tender and endearing regard. They feel that He is their human friend, far dearer than any friend on earth, who knows their frame, who sympathizes with their sorrows and temptations, having taken part in them Him-

self, to whom they can address themselves with boldness at all times, who ministers to them in the most gentle manner that strength and comfort they need. As during the abode of Christ on earth there were combined in the hearts of his disciples deep reverence with loving and tender confidence, so it is now, and in all ages. The secret majesty of his presence forbids all familiarity, which, when attempted, as it once was by Peter, was instantly rebuked, while John, the most reverential of all, leaned, as the most loving friend, on his Master's breast at the Last Supper. There has always been combined in the minds of Christ's followers a reverence the most deep and a confidence the most endearing. He has been felt by all of them to be their counsellor and friend. With joy unspeakable have they looked forward to seeing Him as He is, when they themselves shall be like Him as regards his exalted humanity. How has the very thought of this entry into his presence lit up their

path, even when otherwise dark and dreary, through life, and kindled their brightest hopes at the hour of death! These feelings towards Christ have existed avowedly, and exist still, in the minds of large numbers of persons, who have shown by their actions that they have felt them to be more real and intense than even the love of nearest kindred.

Witness the spirit and the deeds of the apostles and of the early Christians — the giving up of all for Christ, the yearning, as of Paul in his Epistles, for the manifestation of the glory of Christ, the leaning upon Christ for strength and counsel, the cleaving of the heart to Him in every position of life, the counting of all things but loss for the excellency of Christ, the regardlessness of life and its enjoyments for his sake, the bearing of humiliation and torture with gladness, without any idea, as in the case of the heathen, of merit, the going down with joy, as Stephen, to the martyr's grave. These feelings,

exhibited at first, have been repeated in many ages of the Church's history, down to times comparatively recent, and even in our own days.

The faithfulness of those who suffered professedly for Christ — faithfulness which is amply attested in history, and the spirit of which breathes everywhere in the sacred writings—was not shown in defence of mere abstract principles, though such principles were involved. It was a faithfulness in which not the intellect only, but the whole heart, was engaged—the faithfulness as of parents, when they will sacrifice all for their children, or friend for loving friend. Principles, when viewed merely as abstract, have little power in inducing men to action, and especially to suffering. It is only when the heart is engaged, when the defence of these principles involves the strongest affections, that men will suffer all things rather than surrender them. No better evidence could be given of

the intense reality of the love of many to Christ than the method in which that love has influenced their lives, not only in times of fiery persecution, when the very enthusiasm of numbers may help to fan the flame, but also in life's quiet everyday work.

If such a feeling as this, bearing such fruits, be a delusion, it is the most strange delusion that has ever inspired the souls of men. Not mere enthusiasts, but men of the strongest practical sense, profess to have been absorbed by it, and have proved the genuineness of their profession. A devoted affection to a mere imaginary being, which will, age after age, induce sober-minded men, in their calm moments, to do and suffer all for his supposed sake, is surely the most extraordinary phenomenon imaginable—is, in fact, an impossibility.

Whence, then, has this feeling arisen in the minds of the followers of Christ, which has been tested as genuine by the most fiery

ordeals? Does it not give irresistible evidence of the existence of Christ, as represented, in his divinity and humanity, at the right hand of power, and of his communication, in some method, with the souls of those who are inspired with faith and filled with ardent love? Such a feeling of love must descend from the greater to the less. We love Him because He first loved us. The mother loves her child, and twines its affections round herself by the exhibition of her love, in her many acts of watchful kindness. The child loves because it has been loved. If this devotion to Christ is a reality, as so many attest, it must proceed from Christ Himself, who exhibits his love toward us personally, and makes us, through the influence of the Spirit, feel the influence of that love, described in the Word of God, as shown towards ourselves. Because men feel in their hearts that Christ intensely loved and loves them, that He came into the world to die for

them, that He endured all things for their sake, they give to Him the chief place in their affections. Love cannot be constrained or forced; it must spring up spontaneously. As we, by faith, which is the gift of God, feel Christ's tender loving-kindness breathing upon us in our daily life, our hearts are touched within us, and our devotion to Him becomes the most cherished passion of our lives.

Thus this devoted love of many to Christ, so that they will gladly suffer the loss of all things for his sake, is the most convincing evidence of the reality of his existence in heavenly places, as their friend and Saviour. It is not a dead Christ but a living Christ that excites enthusiasm. His death, indeed, as an atonement for sin, is ever remembered with deepest gratitude, and is the exciting theme of the noblest songs of praise; but in his life is their joy. From Him come the pulsations of spiritual life. As devotion to a sovereign indicates the existence of qualities

which have called forth this feeling, so the devotion of the heart to Christ indicates a knowledge of Him as possessed of those characteristics which have stirred up this affection. Christ, in heavenly places, our Divine Saviour, present with every soul possessed of genuine faith, the all-powerful Intercessor, the rightful Lord of the conscience and Guide in the ways of holiness, the Good Shepherd who gently leads his flock and carries the lambs in his arms, faithful to his promises, gracious and loving in his intercourse, furnishes the only rational explanation of that joy in Him which has been felt by many who have borne gladly all things for his sake. The ocean of life to be found in Him explains the wells of living water in his servants which never run dry. It is because He has ascended on high, leading captivity captive, and receiving gifts for men; because He is always dispensing his blessings to those who come to Him; because He is refreshing and rejoicing

them by the way; because his ears are open to their prayers and He liberally grants their requests; because He manifests Himself to them in another way than He does to the world—that their souls are inspired with devotion to Him, and that they count all things but loss for his sake. Nothing could show more strikingly the reality of Christ's mission and his continued presence in his Church than those affections of his true followers, which fill them with a joy that they would not exchange for all that the world can give, and with a peace that continues unshaken in the midst of all calamities, and which make them, without fear, yea, with confidence and joy, to contemplate passing through the dark valley of the shadow of death. It is only personal love to a living Saviour that could bear such fruits. These fruits give evidence, therefore, to the world in all ages of Christ's presence and power.

2.—WITH THE CHURCH COLLECTIVELY.

Christ has manifested his presence, not only to individual souls, but to that Church which He has founded, and through which He blesses the world. There is a Church visible which Christ established, to which He committed the oracles of God, and through which He dispenses constant blessings. Of this Church it was said that the gates of hell should not prevail against it. It was built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone. His care for it was shown in the method in which it was founded, the previous training of the apostles by Himself during the three years of his public ministry, the pouring down of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the extraordinary gifts bestowed on the apostles and others, the institution of the sacraments, the ordaining of men for the special offices of the Church, the setting apart

of the first day of the week for Christian service, and many other things. His tender regard to the interests of this Church was shown in his appearance to Saul, as one born out of due time, when He sent him forth to be the great preacher to the Gentiles; and in his revelation of Himself to the Apostle John, at a much later period, to give counsel unto the seven churches of Asia, and through them to his servants in every age, and to describe the events which were to befall the Church, till her final and complete victory. In that sketch of the future given in the revelation of Christ to his apostle, we observe with what constant care the Lord designed to watch over his Church, in the midst of those dangers through which she was to pass, and which, but for his protection, must have overwhelmed her. While we see, on the one side, a picture of human depravity and Satanic power well fitted to make us despair, if the narrative had not been completed, we behold, on the other,

most striking representations of the tender watchful care of Christ over his Church, and of his safe guidance of her through every storm, until she be borne triumphantly into the haven of eternal rest and glory.

And as it is pictured in that remarkable book, so has it happened. The Church has encountered many dangers which must have overwhelmed her, but for the unseen presence of her Lord. Satan has ingeniously tried to adapt her machinery to his own ends, making use of certain grand principles of Christianity and perverting them, for the building up and extension of his power. Thus the unity of the faith, the duty of absolute obedience to Christ, the necessity of repentance, the benefits of the sacraments—these and other doctrines of Christianity he ingeniously perverted to his purposes, until he had raised up an outward ceremonialism, a system of penances, a sacramental idolatry, and many other evils;—and then he boldly

attempted to stamp out truth and freedom of conscience by using the powers of earth to maintain by force his forged imitation of the unity of the faith.

The Church has been assailed by many and powerful enemies. What, then, has protected her in the midst of danger? What has brought her back to her moorings when she has been cast adrift on the waves? Christ has, again and again, made the weak things of the world to confound those that were mighty. He has, in quiet and remote corners, raised up those who, beginning their work in comparative feebleness and without any clear understanding themselves of its magnitude, have revolutionised the world, and brought into contempt the mighty powers that have risen against them. It is of the deepest interest to observe how the Church has been preserved in the midst of perils, delivered at the very time when her case appeared to be most hopeless, and by instrumentalities ap-

parently most unequal to the task. This was seen frequently in the Middle Ages, when darkness seemed about to overspread the Christian world. The Lord raised up, now here, now there, resolute witnesses to bear testimony to his truth. Some of the noblest Christian men that the world has seen arose out of the midst of the corrupt Church of that period, to protect her against the anti-Christian Power to which they were required to submit. When at length the position of Christendom was becoming almost hopeless, there appeared a multitude of witness-bearers by whom the Church was rescued from destruction. In periods still later, the presence of Christ has been frequently manifest in the delivery of his servants. Only last century, a small band of humble but persecuted men, in an obscure village of Germany, gave the first grand impetus to that work of missions to the heathen which soon engaged the attention of all churches, which was a chief

means of reviving their own life, and which will, we believe, not cease to be carried on, till the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ.

It is to be noticed that in every case, without exception, it has been love to Christ and zeal for his glory that has inspired those who have been the means of rescuing the Church from peril. Regard unto Christ's authority, as indicated in the Scriptures, devotion to Him as King of kings and Lord of lords, the only rightful ruler of conscience, has given the grand impulse to every change by which the destinies of the Church, in the world or among special nations, have been affected. Where this has been absent, a cold, so-called philosophical religion has done nothing. Such religion has been quiescent, amidst the most fatal perversions and abuses. Do we not see, then, the living Christ, acting in his Church, by making Himself known to the souls of his servants, and by arousing

them, through personal love to Himself, to jealousy for his truth and to earnest labours in his cause. Long since would the Church have perished, had she not been protected by a living power, stronger than all the influences of the world. But the gates of hell cannot prevail against her, because He, who is Divine, and to whom all power in heaven and earth is given, is always present in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.

IX.

NATIONS AND POLITICS.

NO idea can be more mistaken than that frequently mooted, that religion has nothing to do with politics. It has nothing to do with the petty manœuvres and selfish schemes which are often associated with politics, but it is intimately concerned with the great political events of the world. The rise and fall of nations are arranged by God, and are a chief means in his hand for the overthrow of evil and the establishment of good. The results of wars have been of the most momentous importance to the hindrance or progress of religion. This is seen in many parts of the Old Testament, and it is illus-

trated by events of recent times. The various wars that have taken place, even within the last twenty years, have had a most marked influence in breaking down barriers to the progress of religion, and in opening the way for the dissemination of truth.

Neander has clearly shown how the world had been prepared for Christ, just at the time of his appearing. For one thing, the universal, undisputed rule of most of the known world by the Romans paved the way for the founding and spreading abroad of a religion, fitted and designed to be universal.

We would now briefly trace, in the light of prophecy, the presence and influence of Christ in the history of the nations from the beginning to the millennial period, referring expressly to those prophecies which describe events that took place long after the books, not only may, but *must* by universal acknowledgment, have been written.

To mark, however, the fact of God's govern-

ment of the affairs of nations from the beginning, so as to prepare for the Messianic kingdom, we may note the prophecies of Genesis. There was the promise given by God to our first parents immediately after the fall. There were the prophecies of Noah to all nations regarding the coming flood. There were the promises given to Abraham of blessings to rest on his posterity, and his vision of the oppression in Egypt for four hundred years. There were the same promises repeated to Isaac and Jacob.

There was, at a later period, the settlement of the Jewish nation in the land of Canaan; their separation from other nations by the worship of one God, by their special ordinances and codes of laws, by their theocratic government, by their sacred writings, by their prophets, and by their opposition to idolatry. It is a historic fact that this nation occupied the same territory for fifteen hundred years, that they were widely separated, by their religion especially, from all other na-

tions, and that they lived in expectation of a Messiah who was to be a mighty King.

This nation, though cut off from others by special command, was taught to look upon the whole world as under the government of Jehovah, and upon all kings and princes as subject to Him. If we examine its sacred writings we see this most strikingly. Especially as the centuries advanced, this world-wide aspect of the Jewish religion and of the national promises became more manifest. The prophet Isaiah, who writes, with the vivid descriptive powers of an eye-witness, of events in the reign of King Hezekiah, who evidently participated in the counsels of that king, passes far beyond the narrow boundaries of Judæa, and describes in language, the sublimity of which has never been equalled, the far-extending empire of the God of Israel. He speaks of Him as ruling over all empires; as raising up one and casting down another for his own special

purposes; as directing and controlling the affairs of the whole world.

Babylon, the first of what might be called the world-wide empires, that is, of the empires which embraced the larger portion of the civilised world, for Nineveh scarcely attained to this position, had not, at the time of King Hezekiah, risen to the climax of its power. It did so about a century later, under the greatest of its kings, Nebuchadnezzar. Yet how vividly did this prophet, even in the earlier portion of his prophecy, describe the fall of the empire and the destruction eventually of the city. The pictures given in the thirteenth and fourteenth chapters are among the most powerful ever painted in human language. "And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither

shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there. And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces."

The effect of this ruin of Babylon on other nations is thus described: "The whole earth is at rest, and is quiet: they break forth into singing. Yea, the fir-trees rejoice at thee, and the cedars of Lebanon, saying, Since thou art laid down, no feller is come up against us. Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. All they shall speak and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we? Art thou become like

unto us? Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, and the noise of thy viols: the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee." The fate of other kingdoms of less influence is also vividly described, and in the forty-fifth chapter, Cyrus is summoned by name as appointed of God to restore power to Israel. In the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel we have similar representations given of the sovereignty of God over the nations. In the former the Medes are represented as coming up against Babylon, as burning the reeds in the channel of the river, and as slaying the wise men and the mighty men in their drunken sleep — all of which events literally took place.

The book which most clearly depicts God's government of the nations, and preparation, through the great events happening to them, for the triumph of the kingdom of Messias, is the prophecy of Daniel. The professed date of this book has been questioned, chiefly

on account of the evident minuteness and clear fulfilment of its prophecies, though linguistic reasons have also been stated. Of course many Chaldaeistic phrases might be expected in the period of Daniel. There are strong reasons for believing the book to have been written at the very time implied; but granting, for the sake of argument, that this may be disputed, there can be no question, on the part of *any* critic, that it was written before the supremacy or decay of the Roman empire. With this admission we may be well satisfied, if we wish to prove the prophetic power of the writer. In several distinct visions he describes the rise and fall of those great world-wide empires which were to rule over the nations. There is the interpretation of the dream of Nebuchadnezzar in the second chapter, and the vision of the four beasts or living creatures in the seventh chapter, together with all that followed the latter vision, to the close of the book. It is

impossible for any dispassionate reader to peruse the prophecies either of the second or the seventh chapters without seeing that they most vividly describe the successive world-ruling powers. The application of the prophecy to Babylon, the Medes and Persians, and the Grecians has never been disputed. Those who deny the prophetic power wish to ascribe the origin of the book to a later period than that of Alexander the Great. But none of these descriptions are more apt or striking than that given of the Roman empire, which, according to the most sceptical critics, had not revealed itself at the time this book was written. Let us glance at these descriptions. "The fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. . . . And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they

shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay." Could any description more fitly mark the special character of the Roman rule? It foretells also, in language the most accurate, the rise in the midst of this kingdom of another kingdom—a stone cut out of the mountain without hands, which brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold. In the seventh chapter we find the Roman empire thus described: "After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it." In the eighth chapter, after the description of the Grecian kingdom, as broken up into four kingdoms, it is said that out of one of them, "when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark

sentences, shall stand up. . . . And he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practise, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people. He shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand." In these various descriptions we see the Roman rule described with the greatest accuracy: its iron oppressive nature; its powerlessness to commingle with the nations it subdued; its destruction of the Jewish nation; its conflicts with Christianity, and its final and gradual disappearance, without any momentous conflict. But if the Roman empire is so clearly prophesied of, we cannot doubt that the whole of the prophecies of Daniel are genuinely what they profess to be. True prophecy—which is necessarily the gift of God who alone foresees the future—and fraud cannot commingle. And in these prophecies we mark most clearly the presence of Christ and his controlling power, in the events affecting the

destinies of the nations. Daniel, himself the leading statesman of two successive world-wide empires, who had more experience in political affairs than almost any man that ever lived, was honoured to be the great prophet of the future ages, foreshadowing the Divine rule of the world, until the end of time.

In the New Testament Jesus Christ Himself foretells the disastrous fall of Jerusalem with great minuteness and the scattering abroad of the Jews, as well as their degraded position in the coming ages. Never had a people so plainly written on them the curse of God, as this people in their wanderings among all nations. For many centuries they were regarded, everywhere, as the offscouring of all things. This they endured on account of their being cast out of the inheritance for their rebellions against God, and especially for their wicked rejection of the Messiah.

In the Revelation, which is *par excel-*

lence the prophetic book of the New Testament, the presence of Christ in national affairs is clearly traced. This book gave, through its predictions, the greatest consolation to the servants of Christ in the darkest period of the Church's history, as it showed that the present calamities as well as the future glory had been clearly foreseen, and that Christ was preparing to bring good out of the apparent evil.

The Revelation maps out very distinctly the great leading events which were to befall the Church and the world, till the end of time. We can plainly discern the different persecutions under the Roman emperors; the conflicts between truth and error in the earlier centuries; the gradual emerging from the midst of the professing Church of that Power within the Church, clearly described before by Daniel, which was to pervert the apostolic doctrines, to expose the faithful servants of Christ to bitter trials and sufferings, and which

was, however, eventually to be utterly overthrown—cast down into the depths of the sea, to be found no more at all. It is impossible to read the narrative of the future, as given, for instance, in the seventeenth chapter, without seeing how accurately is described that hideous Power, called Antichrist even by Dante and various others of the greatest writers of the Middle Ages, which persecuted the truth, substituted for the simplicity of the Gospel a system of mystical rites, and ruthlessly slew millions of the Lord's servants. "The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls. . . . And upon her forehead was a name written, Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of harlots and abominations of the Earth. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration." The angel in interpreting this vision says:

"The waters which thou sawest are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues. . . And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth." No clearer statement could be given as to that city which was to be the centre of the Church's corruption.

Throughout the whole book, as we study it in detail, we see represented, more and more clearly, the events which have actually befallen the Church and the nations. The invisible influence of Christ in the great national changes which are taking place from age to age is thus apparent. They were foreseen by Him. He guarded his living Church in the midst of them all. They were, under his guidance, converging towards one grand and momentous issue—the establishment of his kingdom over the whole earth—his glorious millennial reign.

X.

THE KING.

THE kingship of Christ is repeatedly referred to in the Old Testament. In the seventy-second Psalm, written by David after the crowning of Solomon, which was the last Psalm that he wrote, there is reference to a kingdom, much more glorious and exalted than that of any earthly potentate. In many of the other Psalms, and in many parts of the prophets, there are descriptions of this kingdom. The passages which might be quoted to show this are very numerous. There can be no doubt that, directed by the light of such passages of Scripture, the Jews universally expected their Messiah to be a king. One

multitude whom He fed, as they saw his wonderful power, immediately wished to make Him a king. His disciples, to the time of his death, looked forward to the establishment of his kingdom. He Himself never denied his true kingship, but frequently asserted it. He prepared the way for his last royal entry into Jerusalem. He said to Pilate that He was a king, though He explained that his kingdom was not of the rude earthly type. On his cross there was written, by direction of Pilate, but under the guidance of God, in three languages, the three representative languages of the world—the theological, the cultivated, the imperial—"Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."

Christ is the King over his Church visible, over every soul that submits to his authority, and over the nations.

The Church of Christ on earth, in its various branches, is governed by Christ its King. In its regulations for the reception and re-

jection of members, for the setting apart to its offices, for the fixing of the duties of those offices, and for all that regards its spiritual work it ought to be guided by no earthly policy, but by the law of Christ. Nothing tends more to weaken Christianity and to lower its testimony against evil than the attempt to govern the Church on principles of worldly expediency. When the offices of the Church are sought for position and lucre, when its membership is regarded as a mere badge of respectability, when its discipline is affected by State policy, it is not rendering obedience to its King.

Christ is also King over the souls of all his faithful followers. When they obtain forgiveness through his cross, and are born again of the Spirit, they yield themselves to his sovereign authority. He has given to them most plainly a law of love by which to guide their steps in the way of life. He has also given them his Spirit to enable them to obey this law. It

is not a law of bondage, constraining them to rigid outward observances, to which they have no inclination. It is a law which controls the secret motives of the heart, which requires purity and holiness in the inward parts. It forbids the indulgence of those evil passions which produce in themselves such misery. It commands the fostering of those feelings which it is the greatest enjoyment to cultivate. Christ Himself is present continually with the soul, directing it, and blessing it, strengthening it to resist the power of its enemies, filling it with the hope of salvation, and enabling it to strive after perfect holiness. He arms it for the battle with those weapons by which He Himself resisted and overcame. In his name it goes forth to the conflict,—without fear. Strengthened by Him, it advances through all parts of the arduous and difficult course of life, and, sustained by his might, it passes at length through the dark valley of the shadow of death, fearing no

evil. The rule of Christ over the soul is most gentle and pleasant. He supplies it with grace; He gives it strength; He hears its prayers, and, as the priestly Intercessor, obtains a speedy and abundant answer. He loads it with his riches. He makes it to rejoice in communion with Himself. There is no blessing which He does not supply. And if sometimes He sharply rebukes it, He does so on account of culpable negligence, through which it has forgotten for the moment its powers and privileges and foolishly wandered into ways of evil.

Christ, again, is rightful King over the world. He might have taken this kingdom to Himself, at once. Had He used his miraculous gifts to exalt the Jewish nation of his own day, even the Scribes and Pharisees would gladly have owned Him as their King. But his kingdom was not to be, and could not in the nature of things be, of this tyrannic nature. He rejected with scorn the offer of

the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, made by Satan,—to be gained by the use of force and craft. He wished not such a kingdom, but a kingdom of devoted subjects, where all should joyfully and intelligently yield to his authority. The kingdom of Christ will never be a kingdom of bondage. Those who are his subjects will be hearty in their allegiance. Those who are not willing to submit to Him will be left out of the kingdom. Judgment will overtake them, and they will remain under the dominion of Satan. There is no middle position between the kingdoms of light and darkness, no kingdom of force and restraint, ruled over by Christ.

This kingship of Christ began very early to exercise an influence, but its power will not be fully established till a new dispensation be ushered in and the millennial period be begun on earth. In the past it has been as a leaven, leavening the nations. No one can

peruse the pages of history without seeing that the principles of Christ have, to a large extent, influenced the public affairs of men. The view that He gave of the value of every human soul, as possessed of immortality, has gradually affected the whole method of government. The duty of ruling justly and protecting equally the lives and property of all classes of society has come to be a recognised maxim of statesmen. The obligation to care for the poor and needy, to protect the widows and fatherless, and to provide for the aged and distressed, has been acknowledged, more and more, in the public acts of all countries, professedly Christian. A sympathy has been established between the governors and the governed to an extent that could scarcely have been imagined in former ages. Under the Jewish dispensation we see, in the law given to Moses, the utmost regard to the welfare of all classes; but that dispensation was of Divine origin, and was intended to

foreshadow the future, to be afterwards revealed. It is impossible not to observe that the teaching of Christ has immensely affected the public institutions of society in many directions. In the Middle Ages it ameliorated the hardships of serfdom, and finally overthrew it. In more recent times the Christian conscience has warred against the slave trade and slavery. Through the opposition engendered by it, they will probably soon entirely disappear. The great agitators against them, as Wilberforce, have been, for the most part, men of eminently Christian character. The acknowledgment also of the rights of conscience, scarcely understood in former days, we owe to the principles proclaimed by Christ. These were never more clearly stated than in the first days of Christianity, when Peter and John said to the assembled rulers, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye; for we cannot but speak the things which

we have seen and heard;" or when Peter and the other apostles answered, "We ought to obey God rather than men." These rights, defended first in modern times by Milton, Locke, and others, on Christian grounds, are now acknowledged in almost all civilised countries. In the national recognition of great Christian principles there is, whether it is intended or not, a silent recognition of the kingship of Christ, and of the rightful authority which He claims over men, in protecting and blessing them; there is a foretaste of the glory of that kingdom to be established, when all things shall be under the authority of Christ.

It is remarkable to notice, as associated with this promised kingdom in the Psalms and in the prophets, the frequent reference to the care of the poor and needy. Christ, when on earth, specially cared for the destitute and distressed. He delighted to preach the Gospel to the poor, and to remove sicknesses

and sorrows. This will be one of the leading characteristics of the kingdom. It will assuage sorrows, remove burdens, give peace and security, rest and joy.

Though there have been thus preparations for the establishment of the kingdom of Christ, though this kingdom, even now, is felt in its indirect influences in almost all communities, the time is coming when Christ's kingly power will be acknowledged and submitted to everywhere. This kingdom, in its greatness and extent, is beautifully celebrated in the seventy-second Psalm: "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth. In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before Him; and his enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring

presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before Him: all nations shall serve Him. For He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in his sight. And He shall live, and to Him shall be given of the gold of Sheba: prayer also shall be made for Him continually; and daily shall He be praised. There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth. His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in Him: all nations shall call Him blessed. Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous

things. And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen."

This beautiful picture represents a kingdom of which that of Solomon was but a type. Such kingdom was referred to by many of the prophets, especially Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. It was distinctly foretold by our Lord. It was spoken of often in the apostolic writings, and it was most vividly described in the Revelation. It is that millennial kingdom which precedes the final judgment. For such kingdom there are now many signs of preparation. The Gospel is preached among all nations,—as never before since apostolic days. A seed is everywhere being prepared for the coming struggle and victory. Even the immense and marvellous progress of mechanical appliances—as in the railway and the telegraph which bring all parts of the world into close connection—point, in the providence of God, to a unity of the nations such

as had not formerly been possible. The world is now undergoing transitions in years which formerly required centuries. All parts of the earth are affected by the spirit of change; and it is evident to any thinking man that a crisis is approaching. Traditions and professed principles are now searched to their foundations, and those alone will stand which rest on that which is eternally true. The world is approaching a new era,—a new dispensation.

This new era is distinctly foretold in many parts of Scripture. A universal kingdom is constantly spoken of in the ancient Scriptures, at a time too when, for wise reasons, the Jews were made the most exclusive of peoples. This kingdom, it is shown in the Revelation, will issue out of the present confusion, though only after the outpouring of great judgment. Such kingdom Christ is preparing soon to establish. It will be universal: "All kings shall fall down before

Him; all nations shall serve Him." It will be merciful and gracious: "He shall spare the poor and needy." Its rule will be absolutely just: "He shall redeem their souls from deceit and violence." It will be bountiful: "To Him shall be given of the gold of Sheba,"—"They of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth."

This millennial kingdom is, we are told in many parts of the prophets and in various passages of the New Testament, to be ushered in with the restoration of Israel. They who have been so long scattered will be restored to the large territory originally promised, from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates, which will become the highway of the world. They will acknowledge the Messiah, and will have a position of much influence among the nations. Their preservation for the last eighteen hundred years, as a distinct people, is a standing miracle—an evidence of God's purposes of mercy towards

them and through them. They have preserved their nationality in a hundred different countries, and under the strongest temptations for many centuries to disown it, in order to escape degradation and persecution. No natural laws will explain this—nothing but the interposition of God. The ten tribes were speedily lost sight of, but the Jews have lived on, distinct as ever, after mingling with other nations of every type for nearly two thousand years,—and without a home or national centre during that period. They have been preserved that they may be restored under the new order of things, and may occupy a foremost position among the nations in the new dispensation. They will then acknowledge and glory in the Messiah. Whether Christ reign in person, visibly, or not, his presence will be felt among men in this millennial period, as at no previous epoch in the history of the world. It will be a new dispensation, when Satan will be cast out, and the marvel-

lous powers of the Spirit will be everywhere felt and seen. It will be a reign of love and of mercy, of gentleness and of truth, of peace and of holiness. No poet's fancy has ever pictured the world as it will be in these latter days of its rest and glory, under the rule, everywhere acknowledged, of Christ the King.

Preparatory to this period—which is certainly now not far distant, for which indeed many preparations are making at present—there will be much outpouring of judgment. This was clearly foretold by Christ Himself, when on earth, as well as in his message from heaven to the beloved apostle and prophet. No great change has ever taken place without judgment. But when the kingdom is once established, it will be a kingdom of gentleness and peace, of liberty, and of persuasion. Christ rejected utterly the idea of a kingdom of rude force, and such a kingdom He will never rule over to the end of

time. Those who will be left to inherit and enjoy the kingdom will be ruled with the most gentle sway. He treated his disciples on earth as reasonable men; He will always govern his followers as such. What He desires and treasures in his kingship is the affections of the heart; and by these will He control a willing people. Walking in the ways of holiness, they will cleave to Him with all their heart, and will rejoice to obey his commandments. The Holy Spirit, who touches the deepest springs of action, will make them to feel the reasonableness of Christ's service, and they will delight to do his will. His kingdom on earth will be one in which there will be the utmost freedom, and yet the most devoted loyalty. Men will pursue their investigations into the works and the ways of God, with large increase of scientific knowledge and power. Government will no longer be necessary for the repression of crime, but only for the promotion of the common

good. Everywhere will the earth resound with songs of gladness, as the mind is able fully to enjoy the glories of that abode in which the lot of man has been cast. Though nature itself is under the curse, in many of its aspects, and the whole creation groaneth and travaileth till now, yet what evidences have we, in the beauty of the world around us, of God's gracious designs for man! How, in the summer season especially, do all created objects, clothed in their rich and gorgeous attire, speak to us of the love of Him who has created us! How do we seem to be in another world from that influenced by the petty passions and meaner conflicts of men, as we wander forth to reflect, in stillness, on the works of God! Do not the very flowers of the field, and the trees of the forest, and the glorious mountains, and the brilliant lakes, and the fertile valleys, speak to us of the design of God to give to man a higher position than that he has obtained in this world

of toil, of sickness, and of death! He has made all things beautiful in their time, and He has given man a soul to enjoy them—yea, to revel in them; but men are hindered from doing so by their sins, their toils, the curse of the ground, their many infirmities. But the time is fast approaching when, through the victory of Christ and his attaining fully to the kingship over the whole race, the position of man will be in harmony with the beauty and adornment of his earthly abode. His heart will then be filled with gladness, and his tongue will give utterance to the overflowing gratitude of the soul, in songs of praise. From every section of this world's inhabitants, with peace and plenty all around, enjoying the liberty of the freemen of Christ, revelling in the glories of the outer world, searching deeply into the mysteries of nature and of grace, there will arise anthems of praise to the King of kings and Lord of lords—that gentle King, that

loving Saviour, who has bought them with his own blood, who governs them with the most merciful rule, and blesses them with every blessing!

Such is clearly the prospect before man, as seen in the light of prophecy. He would be an optimist indeed who would expect the establishment of such a kingdom, without much intervening judgment. Christ must first break the power of his enemies with a rod of iron, and dash to pieces their unrighteous schemes like a potter's vessel. There are many, perhaps almost whole nations, so infatuated, so hardened in guilt, that no allurements will induce them to yield to the authority of the King. Like the Scribes and Pharisees, in the time of Christ, they will not hear. "John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil. The Son of Man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a

friend of publicans and sinners." There are, in the world now, many persons of such character, who will not yield at any hazard. Persons thus hardened, sinning against the Holy Ghost, are ripe only for condemnation. It is evident, both from the emphatic sayings of Christ and from the present aspect of things, that there will and must be the outpouring of great calamities, before the ushering in of that state of the world, to which reference has been made. Judgment may remove many from the scene. That judgment is now withheld, in the goodness and longsuffering of God, to give opportunity for repentance. But the Gospel is preached among all nations, and the kingdom of Christ will certainly appear, and the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. "Men shall be blessed in Him, and all nations shall call Him blessed." And this song of praise shall arise from the homes of all in every region of the world: "Blessed

be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen."

XI.

THE JUDGE.

THERE is no subject of thought more solemn than judgment to come. The souls which have departed in every age will at length be summoned to appear before the judgment-seat. Christ Himself frequently referred to this last judgment. He pictured it vividly in the words given in the twenty-fifth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew. He always spoke of Himself as the Judge. When He said on one occasion, "I come not to judge the world, but to save the world," He referred, evidently, as may be seen from the context, to the object of his first appearing. The most vivid description of this judgment appears in the

symbolical language of Revelation: "I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works."

The contemplation of this great judgment has inspired some of the greatest works of poets and painters. Michael Angelo's "Last Judgment" is, for vivid and strong representation of character, the first painting in the world. There is a depth of expression, an intensity of emotion—of joy or sorrow, of peace or of despair—in every countenance;

while the holy hatred of sin is depicted with marvellous power in the face of the Judge. Christ, the tender, loving Saviour of men, will also be the Judge of the world. Nor are the two offices incompatible. The most holy is also the most loving. We see these attributes united in Christ, in his life on earth. While none spoke so graciously to the afflicted and outcast, none uttered words of such withering severity to the high-minded and hypocritical. He stung them to the very quick by his searching denunciations which pointed out, with a word, the special forms of their wickedness. His judgments of the Scribes and Pharisees, so true and searching, stirred up within them that hatred which moved them to cry, "Away with Him, away with Him," and which led them to revel in the sight of his last agony.

Judgment on men has been deferred, to give place unto the mission of mercy. But if the voice of conscience be slighted, if sin continue

to be delighted in, if the world and its pleasures be worshipped, if gracious invitations and solemn warnings be neglected, the time of condemnation will come. Many of the parables are intended to teach this, as that of the wise and foolish virgins, that of the talents, &c. Nothing did Christ more frequently express than the need of watchfulness, lest the day of grace should pass unheeded and the day of account arrive unexpected. His judgment has, in one sense, already begun, though it will not be completed until the last day of account. He, even now, tests individual souls, degrades or honours churches, and tries and condemns nations,—in all of which acts there is a foretaste and a pledge of the final judgment.

Christ beholds the souls of men in a state of condemnation, without possibility of escape, except through Himself. He warns them of their state by his word and ministers and by the strivings of the Holy Ghost. He knocks

at the door of the heart, seeking an entry, making Himself a suppliant, for the good of those He offers to bless. But if men listen not to his voice, if they are intoxicated with the pomp and pride of the world, if they are absorbed with the love of lucre, if they resist the influences of the Spirit, the time comes, as in a moment, when the opportunity is gone, and judgment is given. The Spirit strives no more, but leaves them to reap the fruit of their doings. This takes place often long before the end of life, as in the case of many of our Lord's contemporaries who, by their wilful rejection of all testimony, sinned against the Holy Ghost, and became hopelessly obdurate. Wisdom utters her voice: "Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you. Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at

your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: they would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices." Thus the time of longsuffering and entreaty over,—the summons goes forth, inexorable, to the soul to meet its God, and there is no longer opportunity of escape. "Many shall seek to enter in and shall not be able." Even in life this sentence may be passed on the individual, as it probably often is, but, at latest, at the hour of death.

Christ also continually judges of the faithfulness of churches, and brings them to account. This is seen in his message to the angels of

the seven churches of Asia. He warns them of the time of approaching judgment, and entreats them to prepare for it, by watchfulness and repentance. He says to the church at Ephesus, "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." He says to the church at Pergamos, "Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them" (that hold the doctrines of Balaam) "with the sword of my mouth." He says to the church at Sardis, "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." He thus showed his watchfulness over his Church, not only in blessing her, but

in condemning and casting out unworthy sections. And this visitation of judgment on churches we see frequently repeated in history, at all periods, down to our own day. Those who have neglected their privileges have lost the light they enjoyed, and become utterly corrupt and condemned.

And in the affairs of kingdoms and of nations, Christ acts also as Judge. He spoke with high authority and stern rebuke to the rulers of the Jews, when they had filled up their cup of iniquity by rejecting his divine and most gracious message. He announced clearly, in language the most portentous, that He would come, in consequence, to punish and to scatter the Jewish nation, on account of their sins. Though He appeared not outwardly at the siege of Jerusalem—one of the most signal and awful judgments ever visited on any people—He acted as Judge in its condemnation. We cannot read his words, in the twenty-fourth chapter of the Gospel of

Matthew and elsewhere, without seeing that He distinctly associated Himself with those judgments which were afterwards fulfilled in the very manner He described. He came at the destruction of Jerusalem to judgment, "This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled," though He was not seen by men. He has also judged other nations, one after another, which have departed from the principles of righteousness and of truth—as Sodom and Gomorrah of old, and as many in recent times. How have those nations lost in position who warred against the light which suddenly appeared, three centuries ago, and who put to death many of their most faithful witness-bearers! Have we not, very recently, seen the vial of wrath poured out on a neighbouring kingdom and city which treacherously murdered, or ignominiously banished, the more earnest and godly of the people in a former age? The Bourbon family, which took the lead in these vile transactions, have long

been fugitives and wanderers. Christ is now judging the nations, and He will judge them searchingly, before the ushering in of his millennial kingdom. Let us, as a nation, beware of falling under his condemnation through national vice, through neglect of our high privileges, through idolatry of mammon, or through falling away to that debasing superstition, rejected by our forefathers, which is now making such rapid advance, especially among the ruling classes.

But Christ, as Judge, is especially associated with that final judgment to take place at the end of the world. Then shall men of every kindred and nation, and of every generation, in the long roll of ages, be summoned before Him to answer for the deeds done in the body. The secrets of all hearts will be laid open, and the fate of all will be irrevocably fixed. Then will He appear, whose eyes are a flame of fire, seeing to the depths of all things, and his voice as the sound of many waters, heard

distinctly by all, and out of whose mouth there goeth a sharp two-edged sword, "piercing," as it is said in the Hebrews, "even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." Then will He be seen in person, as the Son of Man, to declare openly the position of all. The dead, small and great, will stand before Him, the books will be opened, and they will be judged of those things which are written in the books, according to their works.

We are overwhelmed by the very thought of such a judgment as this—of the summoning of that immense multitude who have lived in every age. Were Christ a mere man, He could not, by any possibility, be such a Judge of the world. How could He ever explore the vast records? But He, by his Divine

power, can in an instant penetrate to the very heart of things, and lay open the transgressions of every soul. He will bring back to the memory the course of life on earth; He will open up the secrets of every soul, and make it to feel and know the justice of the judgment pronounced.

On that day there will be present the Judge of all, full still of love and tenderness, for "He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," but with a holy hatred of sin expressed in his countenance and bearing. There will be those who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, and who will be honoured in the presence of angels and men; and there will be that great multitude who have lived and died in their sins, unrepentant and unforgiven.

To those who have been delivered from the corruptions of the world it will be a day of great gladness, to be marked in their memory through the ages of eternity; for they will be

declared to be the sons of God with power, will be acquitted of the transgressions of the past, and will enter with joy that cannot be described on that inheritance which has been procured for them,—those many mansions which Christ has prepared. To them the Judge will speak in terms of grace and of tenderness: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." "They have fought the good fight, they have finished their course, and have kept the faith." He was an hungered, and they gave Him meat; He was thirsty, and they gave Him drink; He was a stranger, and they took Him in; naked, and they clothed Him; sick, and they visited Him; in prison, and they came unto Him. They will begin an existence of perfected but ever-increasing glory, as, with bodies fashioned like unto his resurrection body, they pass upward unto the kingdom of light.

To the condemned it will be a day of dark-

ness and despair, as they behold the face of the Judge averted from them, witnessing only his great power, and trembling before his just judgment. They will see in the clear light of his all-revealing countenance their own transgressions; they will remember the unworthiness of their lives; they will find no refuge from that wrath about to descend on them; they will call in vain on the mountains and rocks to fall on them, and to hide them from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; and they will pass away into that indescribable moral darkness, where they will be associated for ever with the spirits of the unholy, the selfish, the malicious, the vile. The scene is one of which we can think only with deepest sadness.

As to the ground of this judgment, they will be judged according to their works. This is stated again and again. It is easy to understand how the unjust should be

judged according to their works, but how can the righteous be so judged? The least of their sinful deeds were enough to destroy their hopes of bliss; and, not to speak of their offences when living apart from God, there is none of them that has not been guilty of many sins, even after he has partaken of the life of Christ. These transgressions, however, of the fallen nature are forgiven on account of Christ's atonement. A new nature is given to them which cannot sin, because it is born of God. Though there can be no merit in any action of the creature, not even of the highest angel, as entitling him to favour from God, God is pleased, in his fatherly kindness and liberality, to acknowledge and reward whatsoever is done for his glory. This belongs to the relation of fatherhood which He has towards Christ's redeemed ones. A child may simply do its duty to a loving father, yet that father is pleased to reward it. These deeds done in faith, under the impulse of that

new nature which cannot sin, are in God's gracious love acknowledged and rewarded by Him, at that day. The righteous will stand acquitted, only because of the atonement of Christ, on which they rested for forgiveness; but, there being nothing to bring to their charge, the Judge is pleased further to acknowledge and reward the deeds done in faith, under the influence of the Divine Spirit. "Whosoever," says Christ, "shall give ye a cup of water to drink in my name . . . . he shall not lose his reward." "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."

These deeds of faith and love, thus acknowledged, will also attest before angels and men the genuineness of that change which has taken place, the saving nature of that faith which they have possessed. "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." These

good fruits, have resulted from engrafting into the living vine. Thus, though the pardon and the glory are procured by Christ Himself; though He alone by his work has placed them in the position in which they stand at the judgment; though by the Spirit He has given them the power to do deeds of holiness, He acknowledges these deeds done under the impulse of the new nature as worthy of gracious reward. This nature is identified with themselves, proceeding, as it does, from a new birth, and its acts of adoration and love and mercy are treasured up in the memory of a loving Master and Friend. None who have not these fruits, however great their pretensions or high their profession on earth, will receive the reward. "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?" It matters not though they may have had the highest fame in the Church, if there are no genuine fruits

to prove the reality of their faith. "I never knew you. Depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first. Many a pretentious Pharisee in the professing Church will be rejected, while many a trembling saint will be hailed with joy. It is deeds of genuine holiness, done in secret, and not deeds of ostentation, that will be acknowledged and rewarded. That day of judgment will be a day of unspeakable joy to those who have been living members of Christ, who, owing all to Him, find that, in his great liberality, their poor imperfect services are owned by their Lord, as they enter upon the eternal inheritance which He has prepared for them.

But the unrighteous and unholy will also be judged according to their works. They have no protection, as the others, against the penalty of their sins as they stand in the presence of the holy and all-seeing Judge. They have neglected their stewardship; they

have enjoyed the blessings of life without gratitude to the bountiful Giver; they have lived for self-gratification; they have been carried away by the rivalries and excitement and follies of society; they have been engrossed with a false ambition and with the love of mammon; or they have got into the vortex of pleasure, and forgot that life had its important duties; or they have been beset with the cares of life. They may at times have been attracted by the Gospel message; they may have found much to admire in the character of Christ; they may have been expert in their knowledge of doctrine. But the seed has fallen into a shallow soil. It has sprung up in a night and withered in a day. Or it has fallen by the wayside, and, by the influence of strong temptation, has been rendered lifeless. Or it has been choked by the cares of this world or the deceitfulness of riches. In some way or other it has been destroyed. And they have

gone on in life until the summons came, or till it was too late for true repentance—not too late in life, but too late in the hardened state of their own hearts—and they have passed away from the scene with their sins on their heads. "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction." There are many kinds of temptation and varieties of worldly-mindedness. Hell, it has been well said, is paved with good intentions. The multitudes before the judgment-seat who are placed on the left hand will have reached that dreadful fate by many different routes; but now they stand together condemned and unprotected. They hear the just sentence of the Holy One which pronounces their doom, and they pass away into the realms of darkness.

It is Christ that has secured the present day of grace under which they enjoy so many outward blessings. He has also given many special advantages to those born in Christian

lands, and especially to those brought up from childhood with a knowledge of the principles of his holy religion. But sin is corrupting and infectious, and it would be destructive of the welfare of the universe were it permitted to pass unrequited. If Christ, by his agonizing death—the agony of his body giving but a faint idea of the bitter agony of his soul—has obtained so many blessings, these blessings must have their responsibilities. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein;" and God will not and cannot leave it to be the abode of sin. If He sent his Son, by whom He made all worlds, to redeem it, it must be redeemed by the gathering in of the faithful and the casting out of the unworthy. The judgment is the necessary termination of the present dispensation. He has let out his vineyard, and He must appear in the end to take account of those to whom He has let it. He has given many privileges, but in propor-

tion to these must be the responsibilities. However dreadful the idea of the just condemnation of the unrepentant, it is most blessed to know that a righteous and holy God rules over the earth, and that iniquity will not triumph in the end. We see the prelude of judgment in history and in current events, in the punishment which He inflicts on nations and individuals. What a pandemonium would the earth become were it not that sin brings with it judgment, and that impious nations or families or individuals, though they may prosper for a time, are sure eventually to become weak and helpless. And what a scene of misery would the universe be, if good and evil were always to prosper indiscriminately and rebellious and godless spirits were to carry out their plans to the end, successfully! In judgment—sad and awful as it is—there is the truest and deepest mercy to the created intelligences at large. It is one expression of the Divine love and

goodness. If men tremble at the thought of judgment to come, while wedded to earthly things, while living without God, while forgetful of his goodness, let them flee from it by accepting the mercy of Him who is "as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest;"—let them turn from their wickedness, and live.

XII.

TIME AND ETERNITY.

THE immortality of the soul is, in one respect, the keystone of the Christian fabric. The grand object of the mission to the earth of the Son of God, of his becoming man, of his atoning for the sins of the guilty by his bitter anguish and death, of his victory over death and ascension into heaven as the Head of a redeemed human family, of his exercising such influence in the world in the revolving ages, was and is that He might prepare a Church of loving and glorified beings to dwell with Him through eternity. This was the object of his mission. How short seem all the ages of the world when

looked at in the light of eternity! What are a few thousand years compared with its endless duration! It was this that moved the compassion of the Son—that the soul of man is immortal, and must exist in a state of blessedness or of cursedness for evermore. We would therefore, as a suitable conclusion to meditations on the relation of Christ to all ages of the world, glance at that everlasting life given to the redeemed Church, of which we can at best have a very incomplete idea.

The last two chapters of the Revelation give a symbolical representation of the glory of the Church in heaven. After the vivid description of the stormy seas of troubles through which the Church was to pass, ere she should attain her complete victory, and then of the millennial reign and of the last judgment, we are borne into the haven of eternal rest, and have a glance at least of its wondrous beauty.

The Apostle John is carried away in the Spirit to the top of a great and high moun-

tain, and is shown that great city, the Holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. The glance or light of it, as beheld in the distance, was like that of a stone most precious, even like a jasper-stone, clear as crystal. It was associated both with the old and the new covenants, for on the gates were the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, and in the foundations were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. The gates were pearl and the streets were pure gold, clear as glass. The glory of the Lord lightened it, and the Lamb was the light of it. And the nations of the saved walked in the light of it. And nothing could enter into it that defiled nor worked abomination. Proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, there flowed through the city the pure river of the water of life. In the midst of the street, and on either side of the river, there was growing the tree of life with abundant fruit. The throne of God and of the Lamb

was in it. There was no night. The Lord God gave them light; and they were to reign for ever and ever.

This is a symbolical description of that eternal rest prepared for the redeemed Church. Seen, as it were at a distance, in its general aspect, it glances like a brilliant stone in the light of the Sun of Righteousness. Seen more near, it is found to be composed of the most precious materials. The pure gold of its streets indicates the perfect holiness of its inhabitants. The pearls represent the graces which will shine resplendent in their bearing and character, and which, as the strong gates of a city, protect from all intrusion of evil. The glory of the Lord lightening it shows that the Spirit of the Lord will constantly fill the souls of the redeemed, enabling them to enjoy closest communion with God. The Lamb lightening it indicates the presence and love of Christ. That nothing could enter into it that defiled

nor worked abomination, proves the perfect security of its inhabitants from all sin,—their separation from every emotion of evil. The pure river of the water of life signifies the gladdening and refreshing influences which will always be felt. The tree of life, with its varied fruits, serves to point to the constantly changing enjoyments of the heavenly abode. There will be no dull monotony, but never-ending variety.

There is no more curse. The evils and miseries of life flow from the curse introduced by sin. Even in the highest enjoyments of earthly life there mingles a curse. In the midst of every joy that can be desired, as of friendship and tender affection; in the midst of the beauties and glories of external nature, even those scenes which most entrance us; in the midst of the possession of worldly honour and fortune;—there lurks always the influence of the curse. There are at work evil and unholy passions which poison the

peace of the soul, or there are anxieties as regards others, or there are sicknesses and diseases,—or perhaps all combined. The countries of greatest beauty, in which it might be supposed that man could live as in a paradise, are often the scenes of deepest degradation. As with some beautiful serpent, so varied in its colours, so graceful in its movements—within, there is the poisonous sting. This curse, in its many forms and aspects, permeates everywhere the life on earth. But there shall be no more curse. There shall in no wise enter in any seeming goodness which covers over secret baseness. All the glories and beauties of that heavenly city will be enjoyed without any hindrances. There will be no false pride, nor unholy anger, nor jealousy, nor crafty selfishness, nor base cunning. The curse is gone, and gone for ever.

In the statement that the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall serve Him, there is the striking attestation to

the union for ever of the divinity and humanity of Christ. God and the Lamb are here used to denote one person, for it is said afterwards his servants shall serve not them, but Him. The throne of the Divine Saviour, the Eternal Son of God, and the persecuted and slain Son of Man, will be in the midst of the city. Christ will rule over his Church as its Divine and yet human King. He will be seen in person; He will be loved; He will hold converse with the redeemed of the most endearing kind, as when He associated with his disciples on earth, and filled their souls with gladness, as He spoke to them words of wisdom and of gentleness; but there will also be a Divine majesty and power before which all will bow in lowly adoration. He will be praised and worshipped by the innumerable hosts of saints and angels as the Eternal; but his throne will be surrounded with gentleness, with tender love, with graciousness, with closest endearing friendship, as the Lamb who

gave Himself as an offering for the sins of the guilty. There will be, in all the praises rendered to Him, the constant remembrance of the amazing love which He showed in obtaining salvation, by humbling Himself even to the death of the cross. With the loftiest praises there will commingle the most tender remembrances.

In the expression, "His servants shall serve Him," it is indicated that the heavenly state will be one of active employment. There is the widest difference between labour and the curse of labour. Man was appointed to dress and to keep the garden and to govern the lower creation before the fall. This was pleasant, genial, refreshing labour. Afterwards he was to eat bread in the sweat of his brow, while the ground was cursed and yielded fruit only with great toil. This was the curse of labour. There will be for ever labour or service, but congenial labour, in which there will be only enjoyment.

Their seeing his form indicates his nearness to them, the deep knowledge that they will have of Him, his candour and brotherliness in his relations with them. He will not turn away from them, but will at all times show his delight in them. His name being written in their foreheads indicates their association with Him as members of his family. As the children bear the name of the father, so shall they bear the name and the honour possessed by their Redeemer. His image will be reflected also in them. His tenderness, his holiness, his truth, his goodness, will be seen in them, and shown in their relations to each other and to the whole company of the Church in heaven.

We are reminded of the absence of sorrow in the expression, "There shall be no night there." Day gives the idea of activity and gladness; night, of rest and gloom. Though night is needful to refresh us after the toil of the day, and is made a means of blessing, in

bringing back, by rest and sleep, the strength which we had lost, it bestows but a negative blessing,—a restoration from a state of weakness. Night pictures that weariness and exhaustion that steals over the frame, and unfits us to put forth our energy. This weariness, which indicates the mortality of the present body, will be felt no more. With vigour and energy and joy shall we use unhindered every power that God has given us.

And as there will be no weariness or exhaustion, as of night, there will be no gloom or darkness, no anxiety as to the future, no decay of age, no loss of those whom we love, no sad associations. All will be peace and serenity and unsullied joy. Time will pass away unheeded; its intervals will be but drops in the great ocean of eternity. The brightness will become brighter, the associations more blessed, the society more enjoyable.

They will have continuous light, and this

light will come from the Lord God. Intellectually, morally, and spiritually, they will receive of the light of Christ. Their understandings will be quickened. Science, with all its recent triumphs, is but in its infancy compared with the progress it will make in these eternal ages. If a Galileo or a Newton had lived on till now, with unimpaired faculties, how greatly more rapid would have been the progress of astronomy! Man's efforts are always restrained by his physical weakness. There, in that never-ending glory, the noblest intellects, in all departments of knowledge, will never approach the end, because God is infinite in the greatness and variety of his works. Christ will also be their light morally, enabling his servants to walk in the beauties of holiness, and to behold and admire the just government by God of his creatures. He will, above all, enlighten them spiritually, making them continually to hold converse with God, tuning their hearts to sing

his praise, and filling their souls with the most ardent devotion. The light will stream forth from Christ into the souls of his redeemed. They will behold the Father manifested through Him, and will rejoice in living near to Him, and in meditating on his attributes and his works. And, as light blends into one harmonious whole all the different objects which it illumines, so will the light of Christ bring into beauteous harmony every element that would otherwise have been opposed, and fit his redeemed to walk in love one to another,—each doing that work for which he is specially fitted.

It is said that they shall reign for ever and ever. Some have supposed from this that to each a special government will be committed. Man was created to rule. The beasts of the field and the fowls of the air were intended to be subject to his authority, and the fear of him and the dread of him were implanted in them. Even in his present state, it is

striking to observe how creatures of much greater physical strength submit to him, and are awed by his countenance. There can be no doubt that those who are exalted with Christ will bear in their heavenly aspect a dignity, fitting them to rule irresistibly over all inferior creatures. It may be that certain races of angels or other spiritual and intellectual beings, of whom the number and variety must be immense, will be placed under the wise and gentle rule of those who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ, been made kings unto God, and been associated in their glory with the Son of God. This dominion, of whatever kind it be, will endure for ever.

Here, then, is the end of Christ's mission and sufferings, of his atoning death, and of his continual presence in the world, from the beginning to the end of time. It was that He might save a vast multitude from death eternal, and might give

to them life everlasting. When we look at the greatness of the salvation obtained, not only in its present blessing but in its endless duration, in the Jerusalem above, we are able, to some extent, to understand the importance of the mission of Christ. A light as from eternity is cast back on the events of time, on the progress of the ages,—on the strangely chequered history of the human family, in all tribes and nations.

We have attempted to trace the relation of Christ to all ages. We began by considering Him as the Light of the World. He lighteth every man that cometh into the world. The present state of the world, with its many blessings and enjoyments, we owe to Christ who, by his merciful intervention, has prevented, and prevents now, just judgments from descending at once on the heads of the ungodly. The light of civilisation, of con-

science, of temporal enjoyments, we owe to Him who has planted many trees of blessing in the midst of earth's darker scenes. We have reflected on Christ as the life of his church, from whom, as the living vine, proceeds the growth of the branches. We have looked to Him as the Moral Teacher, teaching principles of morality which affect the inmost feelings of the heart, but which none could attain to the practice of, except through the grace, procured by his death and resurrection. We have regarded Him as the Great Physician, able by a word to cure all physical diseases, even to raise from the dead, and as having power to heal polluted souls and to make them righteous and holy. We have considered the Messianic prophecies, so full and comprehensive, which show the plan of God in the mission of Christ and his relation to all time. We have glanced at his resurrection—the fact of facts in human history—attested by ample evidence, indicating his

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